The Soul's Orbit

Or Man's Journey To God (1904)

Maude Dominica Petre

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Maude Dominica Petre

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THE SOUL'S ORBIT

OR

MAN'S JOURNEY TO GOD

COMPILED, WITH ADDITIONS, BY

M. D. PETRE

AUTHOR OF "WHERE SAINTS HAVE TROD," ETC.

"Ma gia volgeva il mio desiro e il *velle*
Si come ruota ch' egualmente è mossa
L'Amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle."

DANTE.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK AND BOMBAY
1904

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TO THE READER

THE following pages may, on the whole, be designated as a compilation or "redaction," although some of them are, both in form and substance, from the compiler's own pen, some others in form, though not in substance, others again in neither. For the most part they are filled with the expanded notes of sermons, exhortations, and addresses; in some cases derelict MSS. have been redeemed from destruction, re-arranged, and supplemented. When possible, these borrowed materials have been referred for revision to their original sources; and the whole compilation has been brought into unity, as far as possible, by subjection to competent criticism.

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THE SOUL'S ORBIT

PROLOGUE

When we read of the early Portuguese and Spanish explorers, mingled with our admiration is a certain envy of their lot. A great part of the world was yet wrapped in mystery, and, as they departed to those unknown lands, there was nothing so wonderful, so glorious, or so terrible that they might not hope to find it. Strange plants and animals, mountains of gold, mysterious races of men, anything and everything might lie at the goal for which they made. Thus, too, those who travelled forth in search of wisdom and not of riches might hope to find, far away, some solution of life's problem which could never be reached at home. In the unknown lay hid all possibilities; the call was to go forth, and trust, after many wanderings, to find the philosopher's stone, the key to the mystery of life.

How we could all wish, at times, to share the destiny of Paracelsus and his like, to carry our body with us in the journey of the soul, to walk over real mountains and through real forests in our search for that wisdom which is the life of

the mind. In the toil of the body were thus expressed the labour of the soul; and the journeyings through field and flood would be the outward manifestation of inner wanderings through spiritual lands. What unity in such a life! and how different from the divided existence of those whose body remains subject to the routine of comfort and civilisation, while the mind is roaming hither and thither in search of life and truth.

Herein lies the fundamental instinct to seek salvation by means of pilgrimage; an instinct which drove the mediæval pilgrim or crusader forth from his home to the distant shrines of saints, to the tombs of the apostles, or to the holy places in Jerusalem, and which finds an outlet nowadays in the peripatetic Salvation Army. We want the body to be weary along with the mind, and to express in its movements the inner spiritual endeavour. And, again, we thus give vent to that craving for the mysterious and unknown; we go forth from the land of wont and usage to the great beyond, trusting to find there what we could not discover within the old landmarks.

But how often it is in the home-coming that the pilgrim reaches the object of his efforts. He has wandered afar in many regions, and he comes back to find that which he sought on the threshold of his own home. "You had not sought yourselves and therefore you found me," said Zarathoustra: we go abroad to learn the value of home, and we seek God elsewhere to find Him

at last in ourselves. And yet perhaps our pilgrimage is not for nought, and we should have failed in our quest had we not learned wisdom in strange lands. The beauties that lie at our doors are too often unnoticed until our eyes have been unsealed in another atmosphere: perhaps, like the bee, as Maeterlinck describes it, we need prolonged flight into space for the development of our spiritual, as the insect of its physical, fertility.

Thus, though there is now less reason to make bodily pilgrimages to distant shrines, it may still be needful to send forth the soul on a laborious journey. The truth lies at home, and, like Pascal, we should not seek it unless we had found it. Still, sought it must be, by mind and heart and will, in the ways of asceticism and spiritual endeavour. Sometimes our journey will be conscious, sometimes unconscious; but, in one way or another, pilgrims we are, and pilgrims we remain, so long as full attainment is impossible—vagabonds on the earth, and exiles in the vale of tears.

May these few pages be of some little help on the road, and the author or authors will be more than rewarded. Times are hard, and simple and learned have both their respective troubles to face. For another paradise remained open to us all for a long time after the garden of Eden had been closed, and therein we disported ourselves, witless of what was going on outside. But, whether the angel fell asleep, or whether the flaming sword was sheathed, or whether the

walls fell down, so it happened that this same paradise of happy simplicity was invaded by criticism and science and all the forces of modern thought. Then the rivers ran dry, and the flowers withered, and the fruit turned to dust and ashes. "Not much harm," it might be said, "since it was a paradise of folly, and not of virtue and innocence." But if we have profited at all by our disillusionment; if we are not merely passing from one fool's paradise to another, we must recognise that there is wisdom mingled with our greatest folly and folly with our greatest wisdom; that truth may be real and yet not final or exhaustive; that the soil of Paradise was not less fruitful or its produce less valuable because its walls gave way and showed us the narrower included in the wider.

Yet the misfortune is just this, that there are many who will not believe in the real when they have been deceived by the unreal. Like certain women-haters, who revenge on the sex their own early follies, such persons are embittered against religion and Christianity, because they had conceived a false idea of it. Our hope is to present in these pages a few thoughts which will enable all such to bear the change which is surely coming, to be prepared for the storm, and to have a dwelling ready before the old one is demolished. There are minds which can bear all truth, however new, however startling, and this because their heart is

prepared. In this sense piety is more than doctrine, and the devout will stand firm when the learned are shaken or cast down. The aim of this work is to prepare such a devotional attitude of mind as will be undisturbed by any intellectual cataclysm, to bring warmth to the heart even before light has reached the mind, so that, by the burning within him, the disciple may recognise his Lord, even before his eyes be opened and he see Him under His new aspect.

PART I

THE OUTSET

CHAPTER I

PREPARATION

(*a*) Need of Initiative

Our journeying to God is so pre-eminently a matter of action, experiment, life and movement, that it is needful perhaps to consider what part thought and knowledge and speech have got to play in the process, and why books should be written at all to tell people how they are to grow. Nowhere is the *a priori* method more at fault than in the spiritual life; nowhere is it more dangerous to deduce thought from thought, or light from light, or to advance a single step without recourse to experiment. A "science" of the spiritual life may be a harmless plaything for a dilettante, but, taken seriously as a guide to life, it may be as dangerous as firearms in the hands of a fool. For when we leave the physical for the spiritual order, where every agent and every action is altogether unique and individualised, classification and generalisation are out of the question. The utmost we can do is to teach men how to know, and so to govern, themselves; but each self is unique, a world apart with laws of its own: "For what man knoweth the things

of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" (1 Cor. ii. 11).

Nor is this self-knowledge ever to any large extent scientific, but rather empirical and tentative. We act and move by necessity of our nature, because we cannot be at rest; and each action brings with it a sense of some sort of pain or pleasure, of weakening or reinforcement, of contraction or expansion, of conscience troubled or conscience pacified. And, guided by this spiritual sense, we gradually advance to some vague generalisations, in the light of which we begin to regulate our actions by previous reflection, and to profit by our remembered experiences of the past. It is thus that the greatest experts in the spiritual life have taught us to teach ourselves; amongst them St. Ignatius of Loyola, who bids us feel our way along by observing the inward movements of "consolation" or "desolation" which attend certain actions or purposes of action, according as they foster or retard our true spiritual growth and union with God. For the deeper implications of our conscience show themselves in such vague complex feelings long before they rise near enough to the surface to be seized and formulated by the understanding; nay, it is by this blind obedience that they are brought to the surface: we act and then we know. In the troubles and perplexities of our inner life, when we seem to have lost our way, when all our methods have failed, it is vain to sit down and argue the thing out, as we might

do in the affairs of our material life. Here pure deduction is of no avail; action is the only remedy, the only source of light. We must get up and do something—it hardly matters what—do it as well, as ideally as we can, and with all our might. For this is to turn to God, to put ourselves in dynamic union with conscience and with the source of all spiritual life and light. It is only in our action, as inspiring and permeating our action, that the Spirit is revealed to us; not in conceptions, or formulas, or propositions. And the more that action is aglow with the Spirit, the greater is the likelihood of the understanding being delivered from its darkness and finding the word or the idea that it lacks, and that it has striven vainly to deduce *a priori* from its knowledge. Hence it is by "spiritual exercises" that the saint already referred to proposes to lead the soul from darkness to light, from uncertainty to a clear intuition of the will of God—not by instructions, debatings, reflections, as a superficial inspection of his book might suggest, but by the use of the conative and volitional powers of the soul, by imparting a certain direction to the will, a balance to the affections; in a word, by putting the soul in action; in which action and exercise the will of God, first felt vaguely, at last reveals itself and comes within the grasp of the understanding. From the first "annotation," as it is called, to the very end, the book of the Spiritual exercises is pervaded by the principle that, on the whole, what we think depends on what we feel far

more than our feeling depends on our thought; that we must "prepare and dispose the soul to strip herself of inordinate affection, that she may afterwards seek and find the will of God."

Spiritual books are dangerous to some extent for all but those who have realised how completely the spiritual life must, in the last resort, be guided by the results of personal experiment, and how worthless and perilous is any teaching or guidance but that which teaches us to teach ourselves and guides us to guide ourselves, or, rather, which throws us back upon the sovereign Guide and Teacher, and, as Ignatius says, "suffers the Creator to deal immediately with the creature, and the creature to deal immediately with its Creator and Lord": only these can read the recorded spiritual experiences and reflections of others with sufficient liberty and independence of mind to draw profit rather than hurt therefrom. To apply the expression of another's spiritual experience to our own case rigidly and mechanically is to rack the soul on a Procrustean bed, to sterilise that spontaneity, nay that originality, which must characterise the inward life, if it be life at all, and not merely the mimicry of an automaton.

(*b*) Need of Guidance[1]

In the course of his wanderings Christian was, more than once, deeply indebted to the guides

[1] The substance of this section has been taken, with kind permission, from an article in the *American Ecclesiastical Record* for June 1901.

he encountered for his salvation from various dangers and perplexities. And where is the soul that has, after many storms, reached some kind of haven, and that does not look back with loving gratitude on those who stretched forth a hand in a critical moment, who guided the feet that faltered and stumbled, who roused the sleeper that would sleep unto death, or who bound up the broken limb and stanched the bleeding wounds? It may be, and it often is, that they who once helped can help no more; the bond of sympathy has been snapped, from no fault on either side, and the stream steadily widens between those who walk in the same direction, but on opposite banks. None the less was that past influence a potent factor in producing the conditions from which the present has been evolved; and few, if any, are those who have lived a strenuous spiritual life and have not, at times, depended to some extent on the light and strength and sympathy of another.

Direction, then, is one of the factors which cannot be ignored in the life and progress of the soul. Often misused and exaggerated, turned into a pretext for sloth instead of a stimulus to action, its place, nevertheless, remains in the scheme of religious endeavour; and the question can never be, how to do away with it, but how to use it aright.

We are accustomed to speak of the tribunal of sacramental penance as a *forum internum*, or interior court, as contrasted with those exterior

courts, civil or ecclesiastical, which take no account of intentions or inward dispositions; which presume knowledge of the law, where often such knowledge does not exist; which look to the bearing of a man's conduct on society and not to the effect upon himself. The contrast is, of course, obvious and important; still, when we compare the sacramental tribunal with what is more strictly the tribunal of conscience, where, without any minister or intermediary, God and the soul are face to face, as accuser and accused, it cannot be denied that, to a large extent, the confessional is but a *forum externum*, an outward and visible court. For, although the penitent is his own accuser, and thus all malicious false accusation by others is out of the question, yet this is far from securing that the sin shall be set before the judge as it is in the eyes of God, or even in the sinner's own conscience. For it is not the sin, but the verbal description of the sin, upon which the confessor passes judgment; and the relation of the latter to the former is, at the very best, and allowing for the most perfect self-analysis on the penitent's part, much like the relation of a rough etching to the palpitating life of a natural landscape. This, I say, at the best: but when we remember how rare and unusual is the power of psychological self-analysis; how the mere attempt at such an unwonted feat leads the ordinary soul from darkness to darkness and from confusion to confusion, through all the mire of self-occupation and the

tangle of scrupulosity; when, further, we recollect the utter inadequacy of even the most delicate wording to give truthful expression to what is before the eyes of conscience; and, again, the unskilfulness of all but a very few in the proper choice and adaptation of language, and the tongue-paralysis from which most suffer in expressing anything pertaining to the world of ideas and sentiments—remembering all this, we must allow that the confessor's aspect of the sin is, to a great extent, quite external and indirect, so far as it depends on the penitent's presentment.

In the very act of naming a sin we assign it to a certain class; we tear it away from the context which gives it its true, individual character; we look at it in an abstract and universal manner without its individuating notes—as the sin of X or Y, or any other unknown agent, not as one of a whole series of correlated actions constituting the moral and spiritual life of this particular person, each explaining and qualifying the other.

The penitent (it is said) must be believed whether he speak in his own favour or disfavour. This means that the confessor must presume truthfulness, the absence of all wilful or intentional deception; but in no way does it mean that he is to take what is said as being the truth; that he is to presume a power of perfect self-analysis on the penitent's part, or a power of giving perfect verbal expression to the results of such analysis. If the present usage of the

Catholic Church seems here to enjoin what is apparently so impossible, if it seems to suppose that the priest can really see and judge of the sin as it is in the eyes of God, the explanation is to be sought in the penitential value which the act of confession possesses as a voluntary self-humiliation before the Church, against which, as well as against God, every sin is committed—a value dependent more upon the desire and effort of self-accusation than upon the skill and success of that effort. Hence, to some extent, the judgment of the priest in absolution is forensic and external; based on certain presumptions that hold good for the generality, but may well be inapplicable in the present case; above all, on the presumption that the penitent's stammering utterances are the adequate expression of the infinitely complex human act which they are supposed to describe.

It is perhaps when we pass from absolution to spiritual direction that these obvious platitudes become more worthy of consideration. For if the efficacy of absolution depends more upon the sincere desire and attempt to make an integral and exhaustive self-revelation than upon the success of such an attempt, the value of spiritual direction depends almost entirely on the presumed adequacy of the penitent's statement of the case. The physician, as we know, is not so dependent for his diagnosis on the patient's story; he may listen to it with more or less respect, but, over and above what he is told, there is much

that he can see for himself and test experimentally; but the spiritual physician deals with very inscrutable diseases, which are known to him, for the most part, only through the patient's own testimony. If doctors of medicine are only too ready to confess that they have to act in the dark to a greater extent than people ever imagine, that most of their success is due to guesswork and boldness of venture, how far truer this must be in spiritual drugging and doctoring. A school-boy, poking in the works of a valuable watch with his penknife, can do little mischief compared with the quack doctor who dares to meddle with the infinite complexity of the human organism, pouring drugs of which he knows little into a body of which he knows less. Yet the complexity of a watch is less distantly removed from that of a living body than the latter is from that of the soul and conscience.

When we consider, first, the endless variety of human souls, and consequently of human acts, and, secondly, the clumsiness and inadequacy of human language, we appreciate better the admirable wisdom of another "annotation" of St. Ignatius, wherein he forbids the director to determine God's will for others, to dogmatise or dictate to them, instead of leading them to determine for themselves, and guiding them to the true Guide. "The director," he says, "should allow the Creator to deal with His creature and the creature with its Creator *without intermediary*."

These words might have been written by Father Hecker, the founder of the Paulists. In them he showed that reverence for the problem, which grows upon us in the measure that we sit down calmly, from time to time, and consider its intricacy. In absolving sacramentally, the priest acts and speaks in the name and with the power of the Holy Ghost; but, in directing, he enjoys no such charisma. Had God willed otherwise, doubtless He could have given to His ministers a power of prophetic insight, of reading the heart and the secret intentions of those who come to them for direction. But no trustworthy director can be so deluded as to claim any such power. He must use the ordinary means of observation and reflection; and God helps him just as He helps all those who, by using natural means to natural ends, help themselves. Some perhaps, by nature and practice, get a certain quickness of intuition; but the professional character-reader, the man who knits his consequential brow, and sees through you and out the other side, who knows all about you before you open your lips, stands much on the same level as the phrenologist, the palmist, and the fortune-teller.

Nothing could be further removed from the sane reasonableness of St. Ignatius, with his *tempus tranquillum*, when the glassy stillness of the soul, freed from inordination and bias for the time being, reflects the Divine will without ripple or distortion — with his cool calculation of *pros* and *cons*, and his shrewd inductive test by

varying moods of peace and disquiet. None less of a fanatic than he; none less of a prophet or diviner.

And if we turn to St. Francis of Sales, as we find his words re-echoed in the pages of Abbé Grou, himself no mean authority in this matter, we gather the same lesson of caution, hesitancy, and silence; of "suffering the Creator to deal with the creature without intermediary"; of not meddling in the dark with machinery of which we know nothing.

"St. Francis of Sales," he writes, "used to say that (a good director) was one in a thousand, or rather in ten thousand. Doubtless this is somewhat of an hyperbole; still, it is true that they are not common, as will be plain if we remember what a combination of qualities go to make up the character. For he should be an interior man of great experience in spiritual things, altogether dead to self and closely united to God, free from self-esteem: one who will not tyrannise over the souls that he leads, nor attempt to subject them to himself; one who will seek neither his own glory nor his own interests in anything, but only God's; one incapable of any attachment save that dictated by charity; absolutely independent in the exercise of his office; one who stands above all methods and systems, infinitely flexible to the suggestions of grace, and, like grace itself, taking a thousand different shapes in order to accommodate himself to the various dispositions of souls and to God's designs in their regard. Skilled,

like the apostle, to give milk to babes, stronger food to the stronger, adapting himself to every age and stage of the spiritual life. Wise, but with a divine wisdom; gentle, but not soft; sympathetic, but not obsequious; firm, but not rough; condescending to human defects and weaknesses and prejudices up to a certain point; of invincible patience and unalterable equanimity; who blames or praises, urges or restrains, yields or resists at the right moment; who supports, encourages, rebukes as the soul needs it, shows to it or hides from it its progress; in a word, a man who in no way intrudes self into his direction; who follows God's lead, neither running ahead nor lagging behind, but treading step by step in the tracks of grace, as far as grace goes and no further." (*Maximes spirituelles.*)

"Who then can be saved?" is our natural reflection on reading the list of requisite qualifications. If spiritual direction is of vital necessity, and yet directors are but one in a thousand or ten thousand, what shall the faithful do? or who will presume to put himself forward as so gifted and exceptional a man?—for these are not priestly and official but personal endowments. Nor can we say that, however directors fall short of this ideal, they can do some little good to souls in the measure that they approximate to it. For it is not a question of more or less. If they have not all this skill, if they do not thoroughly know the organism they are handling, if their touch is not

absolutely sure and delicate, they may probably do infinite harm, and are therefore bound not to meddle at all; just as a half-trained doctor may not prescribe, on the plea that, because he knows a little about medicine, he may do a little good. The point is that he may, and probably will, do great harm.

Our consolation lies in the fact that Abbé Grou and St. Francis of Sales were to some extent legislating for an office to which no man is really called or fitted, unless he be a saint or a prophet in the strict sense of the word, endowed with a supernatural discernment of spirits. Such an one may indeed be said to act the part of the Holy Ghost to the souls whom he guides; hence the qualifications are more divine than human. But, as the office of director is understood by St. Ignatius in the spiritual exercises, it consists, not in playing the Holy Ghost himself, but in facilitating direct intercourse between God and the soul; and for this work a much more modest outfit is sufficient—nothing more, perhaps, than those common gifts of natural sagacity and experience, granted, it may be, more liberally to some, but denied altogether to no one.

Doubtless it is the occasional appearance of a prophet, of a St. Francis of Sales or a St. Theresa in our midst, that creates a demand for the continuance and multiplication of what we might call, for convenience, "*supernatural*" directors—of those who, in virtue of a special and divine commission, are entitled to assume a sort of dictator-

ship over certain souls; and this demand is only too likely to be met by a copious supply of an altogether inferior and entirely "natural" article. Thus, ordinary men, without genius or inspiration, are almost forced to come forward and attempt to do what only extraordinary men can accomplish; and this may explain the still existing prevalence of a somewhat unhealthy conception of the office of spiritual director.

It is not difficult to justify the wisdom of God's ordinary providence in this matter when we reflect how hurtful it is for the soul to be thus continually nursed and spoon-fed and kept in leading-strings, till it is crippled through long-continued disuse of its own faculties; how healthful it is for it to be left to stand alone, and to wander in the dark, and so to be driven back upon God Himself for guidance and direction.

Undoubtedly there are persons of a parasitic nature, whose strength lies mainly in their power of obstinate clinging to another. But even these would be, to some extent, cured of their tendency did they not find too many doctors willing to minister to it. It is the superior and not the inferior, the parent and not the child, who must always be regarded as mainly responsible for any deviation from the right adjustment of such relationships; where blame cannot be accurately divided, it is at least safer to call the ruler, rather than the subject, to account. Director and directed have both to practise a certain self-control and

detachment; and the duty of "indifference" has been too much urged on the latter, too little regarded by the former. To live continually in the company of a strong personality and commanding intellect which decides everything, does everything, rules everything, and takes all the responsibility, is most often a calamity for weaker characters and feebler intelligences. What seems to support, really cripples them, as the day of separation usually proves.

"It is good for you," says our Lord to His disciples, "that I go away; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come." Better to know Christ after the spirit than after the flesh; better to be actively self-directive from an internal principle than to be the passive recipient of external direction. This latter is but educative, manuductory; its end and justification is spiritual autonomy. It should lead us to God—and leave us there.

As at Tenebræ one after another the lights are extinguished, till one alone—and that the highest of all—is left, so it is often with the soul and her guiding stars. In our early days these are many—parents, teachers, friends, books, authorities—but, as life goes on, one by one they fail and leave us in deepening darkness, with an increasing sense of the mystery and inexplicability of all things, till at last none but the figure of Christ stands out luminous against the prevailing night.

CHAPTER II

THE GOAL DEFINED

(*a*) In Relation to Myself

When we speak of the end or ultimate purpose of life in the ethical or religious sense, it is important not to confound it with the idea of a process in time, as though the question were as to man's state after death, or even as to the future goal of his endeavours in this life. For the end of which we speak is something that we should, and do, to some extent, realise each moment of our spiritual existence. When a candle gives light it fulfils its end, and this from the instant of its kindling to that of its extinction, and not as a cumulative effect of its continuous burning. So in each action, and at every instant, in so far as we do what is then and there the best, we fulfil our end; it is not a question of present or future, or of time in any sort whatsoever.

In saying this we do not deny that there is a further goal, an ever-receding, or ever-unfolding, ideal of spiritual development, towards which we must always press forward, and of which any given term is an end in regard to those various

successive grades through which it is to be reached; but now we are rather concerned with the end so far as it means the ultimate motive of any present act, the last thing we come to in the analysis of our intention, and which therefore gives the action its final moral character.

Now it is pretty well agreed that, do what we will, we must, in some shape or form, make for our own happiness and well-being; but this tells us little, since the precise question is as to the nature of true happiness, the "content" we are to give to that vague notion. We are all at one in our desire to give the question, so far as may be, a permanent answer; to build the house of our happiness, not on the shifting sand, but on the lasting, immutable rock. Where is such a rock to be found?

From an inspection of man's nature and faculties and history reason has often essayed to solve the problem; at one time giving prominence to the life of the senses, at another to that of the intellect or affections, in each subordinating the residuary forms of life to that which is selected as principal. But we are not here asking an answer from philosophy, but from faith; from faith which indeed involves a philosophy, just as many philosophies issue in faith, but which is to be here distinguished from it, as a settled conviction is distinguished from an opinion, and as an adopted standard of belief and action is distinguished from pure theory and speculation. The trumpet of mere philosophy emits too

wavering and uncertain a blast to prepare men for the battle of real life; faith alone can nerve us to permanent and energetic resistance. Our simple opinions avail but little in the stress of the tempest and in the darkness of the storm; when the waves at length retire our fair edifice lies shattered, and we can hardly distinguish the spot where it stood. But faith is as the beacon at sea, which is made for times of darkness, and to give forth its light when every other light fails; and faith it is which tells us that God is our Rock and the one sure basis of our happiness and salvation. "Man," we are told, "was created that he might praise, reverence, and serve the Lord his God, and in so doing save his soul."

What I originate or produce is my own, to hold and to use; hence labour is one of the most certain titles to occupation. So far as I have put the work of my mind and my hands into anything, so far is that thing mine. Yet it can never be mine save in a qualified and conditional sense. God it is Whose will creates and holds in existence the substance which my labour but shapes and modifies; and He too it is Who moves in my every movement, and labours in my every labour. Human ownership, therefore, is but a frail and slender right compared with that of God. "*Domini est terra et plenitudo ejus*—the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." It matters not how many causes have intervened in the production of my being, His Hand is in

them all, and His touch more intimate than any. Take me therefore as I am, at the present moment, in the setting or framework of all my present circumstances and antecedents, with my face towards the unknown future, I, like everything else in the universe, am God's creature, suspended over the abyss of nothingness by the exercise of His continual, conscious love. The mother who clasps her child to her breast can afford to be distracted about other things without perilling its life; but it is in the arms of His ever-conscious love that God holds me, and were He to forget me for a second I should be as a dream when one wakens. "Shall a mother forget her child, that she should be unmindful of the babe of her womb; yea, she may forget, yet will I never forget thee."

"*Non estis vestri;*" I am not my own but God's, my very personality and selfness are dependent upon Him. For in truth the child in the womb does not depend on its mother in any way comparable to that in which the creature depends upon its Creator. "We are His offspring," says St. Paul; "in Him we live and move and have our being." If then man was created to save his soul, it is in God that salvation is to be found—that *salus* or health which, in its final and permanent condition, is called Heaven; which here consists in the subordination of all that we have and do to the overruling principle of Divine love.

The soul and not the body, the inner, invisible,

spiritual life, not the outer visible and natural life, is what is principal in man, to which all else must be subordinate and ministerial. Denizens of the timeless and spiritual realm of existence, we reach into this visible order in virtue of that bodily frame, which is given us as the instrument of our spiritual formation and self-utterance. We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, which affords us no abiding city, no resting-place for that which is best and highest within us. It is this eternal life, both here and hereafter, for which God created us, and of which He alone is the last and all-sufficing end. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," and, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and mind and strength; and thy neighbour as thyself."

It is therefore in love that we are to find our highest life and happiness and that our soul is to be saved. Love is the life, selfishness the death of the soul. This love is not to be viewed as the condition or price of which salvation—something quite distinct—is the reward; but rather as that in which, precisely, salvation and eternal life consist, whether here or hereafter. Here, as it were in germ, groping its way upward through the dark earth, guided by faith and blind spiritual instincts; hereafter, expanding in leaf and flower and sweet fragrance in the light of God's unveiled presence. "He that eateth My flesh," says Christ, he that maketh Me his food, "*hath* eternal life," not "*shall* have," but "hath,"

for "*now* are we the sons of God," though "it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But this we know, that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

And when we say: Love is the soul's life, it is another way of saying that God is the soul's life. For by love the soul lays hold of God and clings to Him as ivy to the oak, without which support she would crawl helplessly on the earth. It is not in desire and longing and aspiration that the soul lives and loves, but in possession and union. God in the soul is like sap in the plant. "Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these." All their beauty is from the fact that God works His will in them unimpeded, and utters in each of them the thought which His mind has conceived and loved. In so far as we grant Him free ingress He will clothe our spiritual nature with a beauty as much more glorious than theirs, as the spirit is nobler than the earth. But we leave Him standing wearily at the gate, and knocking for entrance in vain. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Just as Hell, or eternal death, is but the seed of sin and separation from God developed to its last natural consequences, so Heaven, or salvation, or eternal life, is but the union of the soul with God carried to its perfection and fulness.

But, to speak more definitely and less mystically, in what does this union with God consist? and how is it accomplished and revealed? In action: not necessarily, or chiefly, in external action and conversation, but in all our free operations, whether inward or outward; in putting on God; in yielding our whole soul to Him to be His instrument of self-expression; in showing forth God in our soul as the mirror shows forth the sun. It is in life and action that our apprehension of God consists. He sets Himself before us not as something to be gazed upon, but as something to be done, something to be produced in ourselves, something to be shaped in the soul; He is not merely the Truth, but the Way and the Life. To love God is to love that way, to live that life, to follow that mode of action which is most divine. Hence many who have no adequate idea of God as a distinct object of thought, love His ways and His ideas and His tastes in the matter of their own conduct, and would therefore love Him if they knew Him. Thus in acting divinely, nobly, excellently, man, at least implicitly if not also explicitly, loves God and is united with Him; not merely by resemblance and imitation, but by a fuller mingling of God's will and operation with his own.

This then, in plain words, is what man is made for: to be God-like in his thoughts and words and actions. It is indifferent what he does, what particular part he plays, so long as he plays it nobly and well. Or, if there is to be any choice,

it is to be of those circumstances which will give scope for the fullest manifestation of goodness and divinity and spiritual beauty.

And the second great commandment is like to the first, or another aspect of the same: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," or in place of thyself, living for the universal, and loving self for the sake of others. A sympathetic, intelligent love of God means a love of all that He loves, a love of every vestige of Him that is reflected in creation; a love of whatsoever things are pure, true, divine; a love, above all, of the human soul in which alone these excellences truly exist. It is not with justice or truth or purity, but with just deeds and true words and pure thoughts that God is well pleased, as with His own children, born to Him by His spouse, the human soul. Divine love finds its full object and satisfaction in this great soul-world, which springs, like a many-branched tree, from its root in the heart of God. Therein all, from the lowest to the highest, from the rudest savage to the most finished saint, are one thing, in such sort that the gain of each is the gain of the whole, and therefore of every other part. Therein the unsightly, lifeless-seeming bough rejoices in and with the fairest fruit-bearing branches, and the ages of human darkness rejoice in the light of those later days for which they prepared the way.

But as we should regard ourselves primarily as members of an organism, as parts of a whole, so should we regard our neighbours severally. We

must love no one of them to the hurt of God's Kingdom, but always subordinately to the general good. In this principle we find a check to the extravagances of exclusive affection, which may, indeed, take us out of ourselves, but which would make us sharers of too narrowed a life. The favouritism of the mother, who loves her child distractedly to the exclusion and contempt of the rest of the world, cannot properly be called selfishness, for it is often extravagantly self-sacrificing; but it is essentially an inordinate and narrow charity, which loves the part in separation from the whole and to its prejudice.

Yet neither is our love to be vague and indiscriminating, loving all men together and equally as if they were a mass of undistinguishable objects. This is not the love of God, Who loves no two in precisely the same manner, but each one for just that personal and individual perfection that is in him. Thus are we to love in each one that particular manifestation and appearance of the Divine nature which is special to the individual soul, we are to love our neighbour for what he is, and what he can be; for what God has actually made him, and for what he has it in him to become.

This love of God, in which the end of man consists, is said to manifest itself in three principal acts of praise, reverence, and service. All the works of God praise Him by being what they are, and showing forth, each in its own manner, what He is. But man, being free, must praise

Him not only by what he is, but also by what he does, not only by what God has given him, but by what he does with it. The praise is to be not merely passive but active; and through him as its instrument all the rest of creation is to sound forth the glory of God. It is then in the highest praise of the highest excellence that man touches his furthest goal, and our best moments are those in which we are lifted out of ourselves and illuminated by some reflex of Thabor glory, when we feel that for us and for all creatures, "it is good to be here." Could such moments endure our cup of happiness would be full, and our heaven would have begun. Meanwhile they are a foretaste, a proof of our eternal destiny, which is, to praise Him unbrokenly and face to face, as we praise Him in brief moments now, and behind the veil. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Reverence is a kind of fear, though not of punishment; it is that awe of something above us which is inseparable from the highest kind of love. "Who is like the Lord our God," said David, "Who hath His dwelling on high, but humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and on earth?" We know more than David did of the vastness of the physical universe, and of the comparative insignificance of man. With the decentralisation of our earth, and its pulverisation by comparison with new spatial conceptions, man has fallen to zero in the esteem of materialistic science. He needs no longer to be told that he

is dust, but rather to be reminded of that spark of divinity by which he is kin to God, and greater than any bulk of whirling matter, how measureless soever. He needs to be rescued from that bitter cynicism engendered by the sense of his powerlessness in regard to the gigantic forces that surround him. And it is by reverence that he is saved, and his cynicism sweetened into humility; through the conviction that his bodily littleness is but the symbol of his spiritual feebleness, that as the heavens are above the earth so are God's ways and thoughts, God's love and power, God's justice and gentleness, beyond man's wildest dreams. To doubt all this were a narrow "provincialism" compared with which geocentric physics were but a harmless superstition. To be dwarfed thus by being set beside something spiritually and morally infinite, a Being to whom we owe all that is best in us, and who is infinitely better than that best, genders reverence where the sense of material nonentity can only breed cynicism. Thus does the very sense of our spiritual weakness and dependence strengthen us against the despair engendered by the contemplation of our physical insignificance; we take refuge from blind material forces in the arms of One who is Almighty and all-loving. In knowing our littleness He also knows our infinite value, and not a hair of our head is overlooked by His ever-conscious love: "Fear not; ye are of more value than many sparrows."

It is this reverence and sense of God's tran-

scendency that makes faith so reasonable, and cures us of the tendency to arrogant questioning and doubt. It is the lack of true reverence for self and human nature that begets self-love and pride, or bitter self-hatred and contempt. It is a like lack of reverence that corrupts the pure love of our fellow-creatures into slavish idolatry or heartless indifference.

The third great manifestation of love is service. When we love, our first question is, "What can we do? how can we serve?" And thus we are brought to our knees in utter self-abasement, and that dependence which had otherwise been humbling and degrading becomes our glory and our happiness. Between those who love there is neither bond nor free, master nor slave. In service and sacrifice love finds both its relief and its exercise. There is no greater sorrow to the lover than to know there is nothing he can do for the beloved; and the soul in which Divine love has been kindled would pine away before the self-sufficing nature of God had He not made Himself one with the rest of creation, and accepted our ministrations in the person of our fellow-creatures.

Thus is the salvation of our soul laid on us as a command under pain of eternal death, and this, not by any pre-ordinance of the Divine will, but by a necessary law of our own nature, and because God is what He is. He is the food and life of the soul, and as to eat is to live and to starve is to die, so with the life of love. If God be not the principal food and fuel of that fire it will

consume and destroy us. Love, fed on garbage, has ruined the world; love fed on the bread of life is to reclaim it. Our affections are forces of destruction or conservation according as they break loose from or submit to the yoke of Divine love. To teach us *how* to love, purely, strongly, sternly, "*sicut dilexi vos*," was Christ's mission; not to eradicate, but to train our affections.

Were we not self-directing, self-forming beings, were it not in our power to love or not to love, it were idle to make it a matter of command. But, whatever other rudimentary tastes be lacking, in every soul of man there is the light of conscience, and a certain elementary inclination, however weak, towards what we believe to be right. And we are here on earth for no other end but to train and strengthen this elementary impulse, to educate ourselves, painfully and laboriously, in the love of God.

This then is the answer of faith to the great question as to our end and destiny. We are here to act as well, as nobly, as divinely as possible, to love God in heart and conduct, and to realise Him as far as we can. This answer explains our soul with all its faculties and affections and propensities, just as some complex and bewildering mechanism is explained by a word from its maker, revealing its true end and purpose. Only thus can we enter into our true joy, and thereby also into the "joy of our God."

(*b*) In Relation to my Surroundings

We are apt to speak of the influence which one man exerts over another as of a power which he can put forth or retain, forgetting to what a large extent we must often influence those around us whether we will it or no. As I pass along the street I may unwittingly alter and qualify the thoughts of many unseen to myself; how much more does my every act and gesture affect those who are in close and continual intercourse with me. Thus do we all live in a state of continual interaction and interdependence, just as we also find ourselves in a set of circumstances which may affect us in one way or another, for good or for ill, but cannot leave us wholly untouched. It is vain to suppose that, by leaving a thing or a person alone, we are freed from any effect their presence and action might produce; the web which unites us one with another, and all with the whole, is far too subtle and diffused to be thus evaded. To use a thing will affect us in one way, to leave it will affect us in another; in no case can we be the same as if it were not there at all.

We cannot then consider our last end without having regard to the field in which our action is to be exercised. As we are not responsible for our own existence, so neither are we responsible for the world of circumstances in which we find ourselves unavoidably placed. Some circumstances are of our own making, but the greater

number are not; and even those which are, can only be said to be so in the limited sense in which any work of man is ascribed to his own hands. As we cannot give ourselves an end any more than a beginning, but can only find that end in the will and intention of our Creator, so too with all that lies around us. We are free, not as regards our destiny, but as regards the directing of our lives in relation to that destiny. We cannot change our own nature, nor the nature of things around us; we cannot pass through the world as though it were non-existent; but we can order ourselves within that realm of activity in which we are placed, and in relation to those other beings with which we are in contact.

If, then, our end is, as we have seen, to live a life as divine as it is given us to realise, we have a right to expect that the world in which we find ourselves shall be in some way conducive to this end, that it shall not constitute an insuperable obstacle to its fulfilment.

We are apt, however, in our childishness, to confound God's thoughts with ours and to expect that His wisdom will be tied down to the rule of our own. Hence that false and exaggerated conception of the workings of Divine Providence, according to which God must interfere at each turn of the wheel, lest our spiritual interests suffer from the operation of natural laws. We would subject the entire universe to our growth, and forget the needs of the whole in our overweening estimate of the value of one particular

part. Hence a disposition to quarrel with the circumstances in which we inevitably find ourselves; hence also a tendency to vain regret for the irreparable consequences of our own free choices in the past. But there is, in fact, no life on earth conceivable which would bring out every one of our possibilities, nor has God ever promised to place us amongst those occasions which will be most favourable to our fullest self-development. We may fret at the thought of our own buried capabilities, but it is a consequence of our very greatness, a proof of the nobility of our destiny, that we could do so many other things than those which it is actually given us to accomplish. Economy is not a divine attribute. Of fifty thousand seeds one alone may come to maturity, yet all the others were of like marvellous capacity, each a miracle of wisdom and power, each the possible progenitor of an entire species, that might have increased and multiplied and replenished the earth and subdued it. And, as in the physical world, vital, chemical and mechanical forces are squandered with a recklessness altogether bewildering to our economical minds, so, in the world of souls, God fears not to provide a thousand times more energy and talent than can possibly be turned to account in the limited space and time at our disposal.

The same remarks hold good in regard to circumstances more or less of our own choosing. There comes a time when it is incumbent on

many to make a choice which will affect the whole of their future; they have to decide on a career, or to choose between single and married life. It is in the nature of things that these matters have to be settled when our experience is almost in its infancy, when our self-knowledge and practical judgment are crude and undisciplined. Hence there is every possibility of our making a mistaken choice, and that the majority of such choices are, in a certain sense, mistaken need not be denied. Here then we may find ourselves in a set of circumstances freely chosen, but not really conducive to the best unfolding of our individual powers as we now understand them. And yet the very well-being of human society demands that such choices should be made on the threshold of life, and that men should stand by their contracts "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer." In all contracts there is usually some risk of loss balancing some chance of gain; but were men free to recede, when the balance turned against them, there would be an end to all contracts, to all social stability. Most men and women, at fifty or thereabouts, will commonly say: "Had I foreseen at twenty all that I should have to go through I would have chosen otherwise." Of course they would; but had they foreseen the consequences of that other choice, or of any other, they would have chosen nothing at all. It is the very condition of life that the future is veiled from us, and that we must in youth, and

often afterwards, take a leap in the dark, and be prepared to accept the place in which we alight. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is with the Lord." It matters less than, in our solemn self-importance, we imagine, which lot we choose, or even if, from a relative point of view, we have chosen the wrong one. However important it may be to make such a choice with due care and consideration, to ask ourselves what will best promote our highest spiritual interests and strengthen us in the pursuit of the ultimate end to which we are destined, we must remember that this same end is too absolute and simple to be frustrated by any temporary mistake; that it can be fulfilled in spite of and even through the most adverse circumstances; whether those circumstances be due to our own, now irrevocable, act, or to the dispositions of nature and Providence. God does not fear to leave us subject to the results of our own actions any more than to the workings of natural laws; He has marked us as His own, and the likeness cannot be effaced by any outer influence. After all, nothing matters supremely but to do the right thing in whatever circumstances we find ourselves; to "make the best of a bad job," however relative and seemingly bad that best may be. Men may stone us, and yet God may bid us go in peace.

If then life seems at times to be a great failure, it is because we limit our end to the earthly horizon, and accept as a defeat what is only an

incident in our spiritual warfare. "*Cur quaeris quietem cum natus sis ad laborem?*" The end of man is not to play this part or the other, but to play well, excellently, nobly, whatever part the Manager of life's stage may allot to him, be it that of prince or beggar. It may be in the character of his part to suffer, to fail and to fall, but his true end is not thereby frustrated. All creation is made to help him in the prosecution of his life's work, viewed under its eternal aspect; it is not the things in themselves that will help him, but the use he makes of them. In the very strength of his effort lies his true success, which is the reward, not of good fortune and easy circumstances, but of right endeavour. We are sheep "*in loco pascuae ejus*"—in the place of God's pasture—but the most nourishing grass is not always that which is to be found in the low-lying meadows, but often that which grows in the crevices of the rocks and on the steep mountain side. We can no more close ourselves in from the influences around us than we can keep our lungs free from the surrounding atmosphere, but we can, in things spiritual, exercise a counteraction which will make everything conduce to our final welfare. "In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will": here is the one duty in which we need never entirely fail, the one end we can always pursue, for our very obstacles are our stepping-stones, and "all things co-operate to the good of him who loves God."

PART II

THE WAY

CHAPTER III

"I AM THE WAY"

"I CAME forth from the Father and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father" (John xvi.). In a measure this is as true of every soul that is saved as it is of the Eternal Word made Flesh. We come forth from God in order to return to Him again; not idly oscillating to and fro, or circling aimlessly round and round, but as those who go forth, weeping and scattering seed, to return again in joy, bearing the sheaves in their bosom. Nor is it merely as a whole, but in all its several parts, that our spiritual life consists of a going and returning. It is a progressive series of pulsations like those of the advancing tide, each gaining on the last; or its circlings are those of the helix, each returning to God on a higher plane. There are dramatic conversions of souls that have lost God culpably, that have wilfully left home for a far country. But all alike, and not only those who have thus lost Him, need ever to seek Him; nor is He found by any, once and for all, in His fulness, but as it were bit by bit, like the gold of a miser's hoard. To-day's gain palls on us

to-morrow, and leaves us as dissatisfied as ever. Want drives us forth again and again to toil in the sweat of our brow for our Daily Bread. Of every such quest God is the Beginning and God is the End. He is the Beginning, for, as Pascal says, we could not seek Him in fuller measure unless we had already found Him in some measure; and only because we have some of Him, do we want more of Him. Moreover, it is He who draws us actively, efficiently, as it were magnetically, to Himself as to the centre of the spiritual world: *Tu enim prius excitasti me ut quærerem Te.* And God is the End, the outcome of every such quest — God re-discovered, more fully revealed, more entirely possessed.

Religion, of whatever quality or level, is professedly the art of finding God; it prescribes the observances, the methods whereby divine favour can be secured, or divine vengeance averted. But its prescriptions are correlative to its conceptions of God; it shapes the way to its notion of the End. And what if its god be no god at all, but some dumb idol of wood or stone, some poetic fabrication of the fancy, some subsistent Idea personified, some abstraction of the intellect? Are we to think of the blood and fire, the incense and offerings, the ceremonial prayer and observance, wherewith these illusory gods have been approached and worshipped, as wholly fruitless, or, at best, as furnishing forms and figures and symbols wherein at last the truth may find a ready-made vehicle of self-expression?

That were a disheartening judgment. Rather let us liken such religions to the medicines prepared by savage, barbaric, or even learned ignorance for a chronic ailment of humanity, falsely diagnosed; one for which, by some happy blunder, they may now and then furnish a partial relief. They are no more idle and purposeless than a thousand other series of experiments by which mankind has blundered its way on to a better self-understanding—blind alleys, false ways, whose insufficiency has to be proved that the truth may be sought more eagerly, may be finally reached, if not by some lucky accident, at least by the tedious method of elimination.

Man's plight is that he does not know what to seek; does not know what is wrong with him; that he feels, but cannot name, his want; and it is from this ignorance, no less than from his impotence, that the revelation of Christ comes as a deliverance, defining at once the true End and the true Way. "I," says Christ, "am the Way, the Truth, the Life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me;" and again, "I and My Father are one;" "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?"

In Christianity two lines of man's spiritual development, previously separate, though parallel and in many ways interdependent, at last converged and became one. His worship-tendency had to struggle through countless imperfect phases in search of fuller self-consciousness, and

of an object that would adequately explain it. It was at first a vague, feeble appetite that stayed its cravings with all sorts of garbage and poisonous or innutritive matter, and later grew stronger and more distinct in its demands, till finally, in the presence of its true object, it recognised itself and its purpose, and transferred to Righteousness, revealed as Will and Person and Spiritual Power, that adoration previously accorded to gods whom Conscience, feeling itself to be something higher, could instinctively summon before its own tribunal for criticism. Again, his slowly evolved reverence, and his knowledge of Righteousness, were not explained to him till the dictate of his Conscience was revealed to him as the expression of an Absolute Will, the Will of the Sovereign Power and Wisdom and Goodness. Till then the problem of his inner life had involved an adjustment between the claims of morality and the countless impulsive forces by which he was swayed, amongst which even religion was numbered, as long as its claims were but imperfectly identified with those of Righteousness. But with the perfect identification of Righteousness and the Divine Power and Will, this schism was healed to a great extent, and Righteousness acquired all the impulsive force of religion; it took over to itself all the inward and outward reverence and adoration, previously squandered on mere fabrications of poetic imagination or of philosophical theorising.

Till then, God was known to men largely in

signs and figures, they fled to Him as chickens to the protection of their mother's wing; they sought Him and were united to Him as to a Power outside themselves, a mighty spirit. They came to Him and spoke to Him as subjects to their King, as children to a Father, "as a friend to a friend." If no bodily eye had seen Him at any time, yet the imagination had pictured Him, the understanding had conceived Him. And to these constructions of his own mind man brought his gold and frankincense and myrrh, his praises, reverence, and service; after the vision of these he longed as the hart longs for the water-brooks: "When shall I come and appear before the presence of my God?"

It was the Saviour who delivered us from this last vestige of idolatry, who taught us to see in these objects of our worship, in these images and conceptions, mere reflections of a Light that we can never directly face or contemplate, any more than we can turn round and face ourselves. "No man hath seen God at any time:" for, in the very act of trying to conceive Him as an object, the mind but fabricates some image of Him, that becomes an idol the moment it is taken for more than an image. He necessarily evades every attempt to grasp Him, being something prior to all we can think of, to our thought and to ourselves who think. And yet "the only Begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him:" "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." As far as God can be said to

be revealed, to become an "object" for human thought, it is in Jesus Christ and in His mystical Body that this revelation is given to us. There that Conscience, that Better Mind and Better Self, that Spirit which is ever felt struggling with our own spirit, imperious, absolute, exacting unqualified worship, sacrifice, and submission, that Sovereign Authority and Judge of judges is truly incarnate, and stands before us in human guise. There the divine seed, that is strangled and choked in the barren soil of our own hearts, attains its full growth and expansion, and reveals its glory of flower and fruitage. "God is a Spirit," that is to say, He is to be sought neither on Mount Sion nor on Mount Gerizim, neither on the earth, nor under the earth, nor above the earth, but in the heart of man, the troubled scene, alas! of so many evil possessions, where the "Good Spirit" ever dwells, and progressively manifests Himself as a higher mind and will and personality, imposing itself authoritatively as no other, proclaiming itself absolute Master, Lord, and God.

Once, however, and only once, was this divine possession so absolute and unresisted, the union of wills so unqualified, as to make that soul to be rather as an inseparable living organ than as an external instrument, however perfect, of the Godhead. Only Christ could say: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father": only in Him was the transparency perfect, and every mist removed that could obscure our vision of the ideal of Divine Goodness

as apprehensible by man. What other mysterious relationships to the Godhead, what *transitus in aliud genus* this unique plenitude of grace, this attaining and faultless maintaining of the ideal involved, we can no more tell than those in the valley can tell what he sees who alone has scaled the heights. What we know, we know only from His words and not otherwise, but for us the precise significance of those words remains for ever a mystery of Faith. If they—those prophets and judges of old—were gods (*Dixi dii estis*) "to whom the Word of God came" merely in the form of inspiration, if every good man as such exercises spiritual authority over us, speaking to us in the name of God, with the force of an external conscience waking and appealing to the conscience within us, if the whole congregation of the Just can at times impose its consentient judgment upon us as a truer expression of conscience or of the Divine will than our unaided effort can reach, shall not He who presents Himself to us not as *having* but as *being* the Word of God, the very incarnation of conscience, shall not He worthily and rightly receive all that sovereign reverence and praise and absolute self-subjection which is due to the Right and to the Eternal Righteousness alone?

It is then through Christ and in Christ that we have access to the Father; He is the Way and the Truth and the Life; if we would come to the Father we must also come to Him: "I and the Father are one."

But what is it to come to Christ except to "put on" Christ, to follow Christ, to take Him and His Spirit as a divine norm and standard of spiritual growth and development, instead of wandering and groping and experimenting for ourselves; to recognise it as a darkness and deadness in ourselves if there is anything in Him that does not appeal to our moral intelligence and love; and to recognise as genuine spiritual growth and development any increase in our understanding of and sympathy with the Gospel. This is just what we mean by having faith in Him—taking Him as our physician, our teacher, our guide; nay, as our conscience and our God; following Him whithersoever He may lead us.

And it is by thus progressively following Christ, by "putting on" Christ, that we "come to the Father"—that we find God and find ourselves. For these are but two aspects of one thing. Only in active dynamic union with our conscience, only in harmonising our inward life, pulse for pulse, with the promptings and drawings of the Divine Spirit within, do we at once realise ourselves and realise God; we *become* something that we can feel and love and possess even though our understanding cannot frame it, nor our speech give utterance to it save in such figures and symbols as: "*Dilectus meus mihi et ego illi.*"

And some such degree of union is the end and fruit of every journeying forth in quest of

God; and the Path is ever the same, whether we recognise it or not; whether we have known Christ after the flesh, or only according to the Spirit: "No man cometh to the Father but by Me."

CHAPTER IV

"ART THOU A KING?"

If to some extent it is true that, as in the case of all great teachers and prophets, so in that of our Blessed Lord, His sayings and doctrines must have formed that first nucleus of the apostolic tradition to which the events of His life were added later, as of subordinate interest, yet it is only partially true. For He Himself is the central and concrete object of the Christian Revelation; in Him, in His life, the Father is shown and declared. His words were but an explanation of Himself, of what He was and what He did; an explanation which, couched in human forms of thought and speech, could never equal nor exhaust the reality. In His case the distinction (valid, for example, of His apostles) between the teacher's doctrine and the doctrine about the teacher, is largely invalid. "I bear witness of Myself," he says; "Come unto Me," "Believe in Me." If He came to show us the Father, it was the Father as revealed in Himself, so that He and the Father together were one and the same object of His teaching—"I and the Father are one." As recorded, indeed, many of the *logia* of

Christ are, neither in substance nor form, very different from the maxims and apothegms of old-time saints and sages. What gave them their vogue, their soul-conquering spell, what made them seeds of fire setting the whole world ablaze, was the personality that stood behind them as behind sacramental veils; the life, the living deeds which they hinted and shadowed rather than fully embodied: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

Yet it may be conceded that it is principally in the actions and incidents of His public ministry, in all that befel between His baptism and His crucifixion, that we are to look for our Saviour's formal and, as it were, official revelation of Himself as the Son of David, the Son of God, the King of Israel; and that it was with this part of His earthly life that the apostolic teaching was at first mainly concerned. But, of necessity, inquiry and conjecture must soon have pressed further to know all that could be known of the origin and earlier years of One who had become an object of enthusiastic devotion and adoration; and from the consequent tangle of conflicting evidence, false and true, fanciful and historical, it was for the inspired evangelist, filled with the genuine spirit of Christ, to discern by unerring instinct what was accordant, what discordant, with the unity of the Gospel; what was true, what false, to the conception of our Lord's Messiahship and Kingship as revealed in His public self-manifestation; and, thus discerning, by an inward supernatural light,

to select, arrange, and present the incidents as we find them in the canonical gospels.

We may seek, then, in these incidents of Christ's earlier years, the light thus thrown back upon them from those of the later; we may interpret them as, in some measure, perfecting and furthering the idea of His Kingdom and His Kingship; nay, we may hold the child and the man as mirrors one over against the other, and study the reflection of each in the other.

It is from the fourth and latest evangelist, as might be expected, that we get the clearest and most explicit declaration of the entirely spiritual nature of our Lord's Kingship. "My Kingdom is not of this world; if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight. . . . I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the Truth heareth My voice." And if with Pilate we ask: "What is truth?" the whole Gospel proclaims that it is not the trueness "of a thought to a thing," but of the soul to its God, of the instrument to its task, of man to his destiny. It is a truth hid from the wise and prudent and revealed to the simple—the truth of simplicity, sincerity, reality; not of the mere Understanding, but of the Heart and Conscience.

Neither the Jewish priests, nor the Roman soldiery, nor Herod himself could scorn his imagined pretensions to pontifical power, or to Caesarship, or to the Messianic glories of the

popular belief, more than He Himself scorned such poor mockeries of Divine Sonship. And yet till His death had finally defeated their childish hopes, till the Spirit of Truth had come and illusion had vanished, His nearest and dearest "understood not the saying." He stood alone, and "of the people there was none with Him"; He looked, and there was none to help; He wondered, and there was none to uphold; but His own right arm brought salvation. To the last, Peter's, even Peter's, only thought was to smite with the sword, and, bewildered by rebuke, he fled; returning but to deny One whose weakness was a scandal to Him. What did they know of His Kingship, they from whom He fled and hid Himself, "lest they should come and make Him a King"—they whose well-meant honours were in a sense more painful to Him, more humbling, than the thorny crown, the spittings and revilings. Was it not nearer the truth, thus rudely and brutally to deny Him all claim to the baubles and trinkets of temporal monarchy, than stupidly to level Him with the princes of earth? In the ragged purple, in the reed-sceptre and the crown of thorns, He at least could see symbolised the contempt of the World for the Spirit, of the Spirit for the World. But not till He mounted the throne of the Cross, not till He hung there dead, defeated, deserted by all, even, seemingly, by God, did He complete and seal His repudiation and denial of any other than that moral and spiritual sovereignty over the souls of men which

was His as the very Incarnation of Conscience, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords—the Sovereignty of Right over Might, of the Spirit over the Flesh, of the Eternal over the Temporal.

If, then, there is a certain degree of Kingship and Authority in every just man, in so far as he is an embodiment of our own conscience and of the Divine Will, if we owe him the homage, reverence, and obedience which we must always render to Truth and Right, He surely is King of Kings, whose will was so mysteriously merged in the Divine, that He alone could say: "I and the Father are One," "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and of whom alone it can be said: *Tu solus sanctus, Tu solus Dominus, Tu solus altissimus Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris.*

It is clear then that our Saviour, in calling Himself, in suffering Himself to be called, the Christ or Messiah, took over to Himself the whole conception of the Messiahship as current among the Jews of that day; that He applied to Himself all that had been forecast in the prophetic mind of that people concerning the birth, life and destiny of the Son of David; that He presented Himself as fulfilling all such predictions, not literally but spiritually, super-eminently, in a higher and diviner order of reality. "Art Thou a King? Thou sayest it; I am a King: but My Kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews."

"To be delivered to the Jews"—that was the sort of fighting He was to teach His servants. Such were to be the weapons of their warfare—spiritual not carnal. Thus, drawn after Him, they were to conquer as He conquered, who, being lifted up from the earth, was to draw all men unto Himself. For the spirit of man must be drawn and not driven; love is free, or it is nothing; and it was for the conquest of man's heart and spirit, for the redemption of his soul from the bondage of sin to the liberty of self-possession and divine sonship, that He had come.

Kingship, in the mind of His hearers, stood for military leadership, for government by compulsion, for juridical absolutism. Power, irresistible force, rather than love or personal attractiveness or spiritual persuasiveness, were the characteristics of the world-conquering Messiah of Jewish expectations.

In this poor childish image our Saviour found but a prophetic figure of what He was to be in the world of the Spirit, a leader indeed, a sword-girt Prince, riding forth conquering and to conquer; irresistible, absolute in His claims, compulsive—but with what gentle compulsion!

And now if we turn back and study the beginning in the light of the end, the birth and boyhood of this King in the light of His manhood and death, we shall see how surely the sacred evangelists have been inspired by the spirit of Christ in that work of discernment and selection, by which they have set aside the vulgar,

materialistic, religiously and morally valueless marvels, which fill the apocryphal gospels; and have preserved for us those narratives whose simple dignity, whose spiritual consonance with the public words and actions and claim of our Saviour mark them with the seal of evangelical truth.

That He came to make us sons of God, the true seed of Abraham, born not of the flesh but of the spirit, receives new and graphic emphasis in the belief that He, the Son of God by nature, not merely by adoption, was Himself conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; that He was the Son of David, not by the way of natural generation, not even in virtue of the legal parentage of Joseph, but as David's archetype, and as the direct creation of that Holy Spirit which but spoke through David, and whose defective indwelling made David in some halting fashion a type of the King of the spiritual Israel.

It would have been but congenial to those current Messianic conceptions, which our Lord appropriated only to purify, spiritualise, and transcend, that His birth should have taken place in the royal city amid royal surroundings, that it should have been marked by portents in Heaven and earth; but if in any measure the events, as given in the Gospel, satisfied such naive anticipations, it was only that they might rebuke and disappoint them, or fulfil them in an altogether different interest and spirit. For if the birth of

the Son of David took place in the city of David, if the Bread of Life was born in the House of Bread, yet the carnal children of David, His own to whom He came, received Him not, nor accounted Him of their kindred; there was no room for Him in the inn where they were assembled; and it was in the manger that the royal child was laid, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Surely, his Kingship and Kingdom were not of this world! And if angels burst forth from the Heavens at midnight, shouting for joy with all the Sons of God, yet it was not to shake the whole earth with fear, to confound the nations, with their priests and rulers, at the advent of long-tarrying justice, re-enforced by omnipotence. No, it was to give good news to the poor, to a handful of simple shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night; to tell them of one born in the city of David, a Saviour to them and to all people; whom, seeking in haste, they found, not cradled in gold but in the rough straw, the child of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth of Galilee. And if, as prophets had foreshadowed and as popular expectation demanded, kings and sages from the orient sought Him, guided by a star, it was but to rebuke and shame the spiritual blindness of worldly priests and scribes by the Gentile faith, that passed heedless by the court of Herod, with its temporal splendour, to offer gifts to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, throned as a babe on a village maiden's knee—to Him whose Kingdom was not of this world.

Again, if it was accordant with popular forms of hero-legend that the Elect Deliverer should have been pursued in his infancy by those jealous powers, whose domination he had come to overthrow, yet it is true to the Gospel keynote that the hostility of the worldly to the spiritual Kingdom should have been marked from the very first; and that the victory of the latter should have been won, not by violent miraculous intervention, but by quiet resignation and meek endurance of exile.

And so in all the events of the sacred infancy and boyhood, in the Circumcision, the Presentation, the Finding in the Temple, as well as in the long years of subjection, toil and obscurity in the workshop of Nazareth, we find the same dominating idea of a Kingdom and a Kingship not of this world, and of which the current Messianic conceptions were, even at their best, but a figure and shadow.

And, from first to last, whether in Nazareth or in Jerusalem, our Lord's whole life is a call directed to each and every human soul; a call to follow Him, to stand by Him in the work He has been given to do, the great work of redemption, which is to deliver the enslaved human spirit from the dominion of sin, and to restore it to the liberty of the Sons of God. This great soul-world is the Kingdom which the Father has appointed unto Him, that He should rule as none other over the hearts of men, the sovereign object of their love and reverence; that this common

faith in Him and love of Him should draw them together into one spiritual communion from the four quarters of the globe; that, with Him and in Him, they should first suffer and then reign, kings and priests for ever and ever.

CHAPTER V

"IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH"

"Of those born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." And why so? we may ask. Well, because the tiniest insect that creeps in the bark of the mightiest tree is greater than the tree; and because the smallest lichen that clings to the rocky surface of the mightiest mountain is greater than the mountain; greater, because it belongs to a higher plane of being, greater with a difference, not of degree but of otherness; therefore, infinitely, immeasurably greater. And is the difference between the greatest of the prophets and the most indifferent baptized Christian, who cumbers the Church, of this infinite kind? That surely is not what our Saviour meant. No; to be in the kingdom of Heaven is to have begun, in whatever degree, to live with a new kind of life, a life which, compared with that of the pre-Christian saints, may be called "heavenly and spiritual," as excluding a certain earthly and materialistic setting and entanglement which characterised earlier phases of religion. To be "in the kingdom of

Heaven" is to have at last attained what even the prophets were but groping after; it is to have at last seized the true gist, the very essence of religion; to have clearly severed this essence from what is accidental and contingent; to have apprehended the true, ministerial, subordinate, albeit necessary, relation of the latter to the former. In Christianity, not necessarily in every nominal Christian, religion has at last opened its eyes, and become fully conscious of its own nature, and its distinction from much that it formerly confounded with itself. He who in the least degree has realised this distinction moves in a higher plane of religion than even St. John the Baptist. For if verbally his message was the same as that of our Lord—"Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand"—yet it is plain that his conceptions of the precise nature of that kingdom, of the Messiah and of the coming judgment, were not yet wholly purged of unspiritual associations; that they were still mixtures of symbol and reality; that the chaff had not yet been perfectly separated from the grain by Christ's winnowing-fan. "Art thou He that shall come, or do we look for another?" It would seem that the faith of him, who by the banks of the Jordan had so boldly proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah, was somewhat troubled and perplexed by the rumours that had reached him in prison—rumours carried to him, perhaps, by his enthusiastic and slightly jealous and less spiritually-minded disciples, dissatisfied with this lowly, peaceful, noiseless Messiah, so little like

the world-conquering Son of Man, who was to burst forth from the heavens with great power and glory. "Yes," they would report to him, "there was talk of strange healings here and there, of a potent, crowd-compelling personality, of growing popularity with the people and unpopularity with their oppressors. But what of that? Had not many of the prophets done as much and more? Was this one before whom the Baptist should give way?—one whose shoe's latchet he was unworthy to loose?" And by such reports even their master himself is brought to wonder whether, after all, there may not have been some mistake; whether he may not have misunderstood the inner word that he had received from the Holy Ghost.

There can be no question as to the moral and spiritual grandeur and pre-eminence of him who was canonised by the lips of Christ Himself as the greatest yet born of woman; as no wind-shaken reed, no opportunist, yielding to the buffetings of temptation by weak compromises of principle and sacrificings of conscience, but intransigent in the cause of God, stiff and stark as the oak, that neither bends nor breaks for all the fury of the tempest. Nor was the self-banished solitary of the desert, roughly housed, austerely fed and clad, a man to be enslaved or allured by the softer pleasures of life, or by those influences that make "courtier" synonymous with "sycophant." Free in the open desert, free in prison and chains, what could he have to do with

diplomacy and with the courts of kings, he, the passionate asserter of liberty of conscience for himself and for others? "A prophet? Yea, and more than a prophet;" a man, not of words only, however soul-stirring and effectual, but of deeds and sufferings; one who was not merely to preach the coming Kingdom but to help in its establishment, to be the first victim of the violence opposed to it from that day forward. And yet something was lacking to him, something that would have lifted his faith to a higher plane; a certain clearness of spiritual intuition, which was obstructed by the last filmy veil that stood between the prophetic vision of the old order and the naked verity as fully revealed by Christ.

"Go and tell John that in Me the prophecy is fulfilled. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them," and "Blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in Me"—scandalised, that is, at the folly of the Cross; at the lowliness and meekness of the Gospel; at what some would call disparagingly the "merely spiritual sense" in which the prophecy was to be fulfilled, a sense which is determined and explained by its final clause, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them" —that Gospel which is sight and hearing and cleansing and strength and resurrection to the spiritually blind and deaf and leprous and lame and dead; to the spiritually poor and destitute.

A strange and enigmatical answer it must have

seemed; one which sent the inquirers away not much wiser than they came. For they had perhaps seen some wonders of bodily healing, and had heard rumours of more; but they had not seen and heard enough to convince them in the way they wanted or expected to be convinced; all unconsciously they were yet themselves both blind and deaf, nor had they risen to the level of those of whom it is said: "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see; and the ears which hear the things which you hear." Kings and prophets in times past had longed and striven to clear the mist from their eyes and to see the truth nakedly face to face, in all its distinctness from its symbolic clothing. Religion, in its childhood, had spoken as a child, had thought as a child, had understood as a child; in Christ it became a man and put away the things of a child. He, who spoke at sundry times and in divers manners to the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these latter days, spoken to us in a new manner by His Son.

Clearly, incisively, unhesitatingly, substance and shadow have been severed and their true relationship defined. "Believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall, neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; the hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth;" neither in

this mountain nor in that, neither in this symbol nor in that, but in spirit and in truth. Man's spiritual education is the process by which he slowly learns the difference between the apparent and the real, and comes to attribute full reality to moral values alone, to that only which is "good" in reference to the soul's spiritual hunger; it is the process by which he is weaned from the meat that perisheth, from the water whose refreshment is momentary, and taught to long only for the meat that endureth, the water that springeth up unto eternal life, the life of that in him which alone is eternal, real, divine.

In His absolute comprehension and conviction of the sole importance of spiritual and moral values, Christ was among those around Him, even the most sympathetic, such as John the Baptist or the Apostles, as a grey, life-weary man in the midst of a nursery full of children. The anguish of His position, the tragedy of His life, as we can read it between the lines of the Gospels, penned by those children for their fellows and contemporaries, lay in the psychological impossibilities that obstructed His task, in the necessity which He was under of impoverishing the truth in the very endeavour to impart it to His hearers in their own language and forms of thought. Only on rare occasions does He seem to have made Himself understood to some extent, and then we are carefully and laboriously shown the mystical and deeper sense of His utterance, as though this were an exceptional case. But most that He said,

or was said of Him, is set down without any seeming suspicion of the probable truth that such exceptions were the rule, that He hardly ever meant anything at all in the obvious materialistic sense which it bore to His hearers; that all His light was darkness, all His truth falsehood for the unspiritual-minded; that His Gospel was really a riddle from beginning to end, whose sense only the wisdom of the pure-hearted could guess; that it was a net trailed in the sea, through whose roomy meshes all but the biggest fish could pass uncaught. Here and there we find a sigh of weariness, a "groaning in spirit" over the incurable carnality of man's thought: "O fools and slow of heart to believe"; or, "Are ye yet without understanding," or "So long have I been with you and yet thou sayest: Show us the Father," or the quiet despair of: "It is enough" (when they offer Him the two swords), as though explanation were hopeless with such childish listeners.

It is impossible not to feel that, if the Gospel of St. John views Him from a distance, it views Him more discerningly and in truer perspective; that it is the work of one who has more perfectly caught the spirit, seized the inward meaning; of one in whom the Master's thought has defined itself more clearly than was really possible at first; that, as history, it represents the life, work and teaching of Christ more as seen with His own eyes than as it impressed those around Him; that it is truer to the spirit, if less mechanically

literal. "I have many things to say to you," says Christ before His Passion, "but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come He will guide you into all truth." How little they had been able to bear already, how slight the progress which the idea of a spiritual religion had made among His followers during His life-time, we know well. To the very last they would give some startling proofs of their incorrigible materialism, just at the moment when they seemed to promise better things, and would show that all His labour had been in vain. Still the seed was sown, and some of it lay buried quietly in deeper and richer soil, ready to bring forth fruit later as soon as the Spirit of Truth, its vital principle, should begin to unfold its consequences and implicit meanings. It was not all in vain that He insisted that the true children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not necessarily bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, but heirs of their faith, like the Roman centurion; that the true Israel was the spiritual Israel; that the true Son of David was He whom David in the spirit called "My Lord"; that the true Christ, who was to come in the clouds of heaven, was the spiritual Christ; that the kingdom of heaven was already in their midst; that the judgment of the world had already begun; that the Prince of this world was even now cast out. Not all in vain did He say to His honour-loving disciples, "Rejoice, not that the devils are subject unto you, but that your names are written in the

book of life;" or to her who could see but the symbols of Mary's true glory, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it;" or to her who sought cure from the touch of His body, "Thy faith hath made thee whole;" or to those who were blind to the divinity of His words and sought coercive, intellectual proof of His claims in displays of magical power, "A faithless and perverse generation seek after a sign, but no sign shall be given them but the sign of Jonah"—the sign of preaching; or to Peter, scandalised at a Messiah scourged, crucified, thorn-crowned, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto Me;" or to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world;" or, finally and explicitly, stating the whole principle, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life."

In these scattered indications we have the clue that unravels the mysteries of the Gospel. As children must receive distasteful medicine in small doses, disguised under something congenial and palatable, so it was that our Saviour administered the medicine of truth to His own generation. It needs thought and discernment to separate what He principally wanted to convey from the medium in which He conveyed it. That work which He began, His Spirit, dwelling in the Church, seeks to carry forward, in spite of incessant resistance, now greater, now less, from the inherent carnality of the human heart and mind. Principles and

ideas must inevitably assert themselves again and again unless they are absolutely repudiated and cast out; must expand and develop wherever they find favouring conditions. They are as leaven in paste. Those words that Christ has spoken are spirit and life; they are seeds sown in the deep heart of the Catholic Church, struggling as yet with tares oversown, almost contemporaneously, by the enemy, but destined to be at last victorious and to bring forth fruit thirty, sixty, an hundredfold.

Are we not still without understanding? are we not still children clinging to the things of spiritual childhood, contesting the claims of Gerizim against Jerusalem, forgetting that it is the reality of worship that matters and not the place or form? We no longer believe that God can be pent in temples made with hands; we no longer locate Heaven on Olympus, nor Hell in the bowels of the earth under Mount Etna; we no longer believe that God wearied Himself like a labourer in fabricating the world, or literally walked about Eden in the cool of the evening. But have we abandoned our materialism, or have we only refined it? Is the difference one of kind or only of degree? Do we not still as much as ever look to religion for a philosophy of the physical world, its origin and nature, for an account of the history of man's outer life? Is it not merely because we are better philosophers and historians that our religion, so far as we have re-stated it, seems to us less material than that of

antiquity? Have we realised that all the sacred beliefs and rites and institutions of our religion are mysteries? that their truth and value and efficacy is primarily mystical and spiritual? that they express, explain, guide, and control that inner world, constituted by the mutual relation of all wills to the Divine Will and to one another in reference to it? that external religion is the creation of internal, that it is the work of the Holy Spirit, the body which the Spirit has fashioned for its service, and which is its likeness and self-expression in so far as spirit and truth can be expressed analogously in terms of matter and appearance? At best we invert the relation and consider the outward sense as true, real, primary, and the inner as secondary, derived and metaphorical. *Adhuc estis sine intellectu?* Are we still without understanding? Are we still less than the least in the kingdom of Heaven? still scandalised in Christ's religion of the spirit?

Well, it is not to be wondered at, when even the greatest of all the prophets still clung to the last remnants of externalism, however purified and ennobled by spiritual associations, still looked for a Messiah and a divine kingdom, not only on the earth but of the earth, descending visibly from the visible heavens. So inseparably wedded were even the most deeply religious minds of His hearers to this outwardness, as the test and note of reality, that our Lord would have seemed to most of them, as He did on far less provocation to the chief priests, an infidel and blasphemer,

had He offered them the strong meat of the truth. Not only the worldly and carnal-minded, but the devout and spiritual-minded, still more the poor and simple, would have been scandalised in Him. Hence the pain and anguish of His life; the sighings and groanings in spirit: "O fools and slow of heart to believe;" "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you." At most He could feel His way cautiously, and, by progressively refining and dematerialising their religious conceptions, prepare a few of the better sort for the revelation of the secret which He had come to whisper in the ear that it might at last be proclaimed from the house-top, the secret that God is a Spirit, and that they who worship Him must worship neither on Gerizim nor at Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth; that the spirit quickeneth, and the flesh, apart from the spirit, profiteth nothing.

CHAPTER VI

"HE WAS SUBJECT TO THEM"

I

EXTREMES are, as a rule, created and sustained by counter-extremes. Licence is bound to provoke some aggression on liberty; absolutism is usually answerable for anarchy. When the French monarchy gave place to the lawless rule of the Jacobins it was a mere re-investment of tyranny; the many wrested the sword of irresponsible government from the hands of the few. Neither these nor those had any elementary notions of liberty, authority, and obedience; of their nature and limits. If self-interest or party-interest, rather than right, be the motive of government, then obviously it was better that one man should die than that the whole people should perish; better that the monarch should be shorn of his head than the entire nation be guillotined. Thus, those who govern by the sword alone, sooner or later perish by the sword.

Liberty is to the soul what air is to the body; it is the essential condition of our spiritual life and of the development of our character and personality. He who brought us the true doctrine

of life brought therewith the true doctrine of liberty. Liberty differs from licence in its respect for law, for authority, for obedience; it differs from servitude in its recognition of the limits of all authority, save that of Conscience, in its sense of the inalienable rights of personality. The law is for man, not man for the law; it is a means, not an end. Liberty uses this means and transcends it; licence disregards it and falls below it. Only through due respect for the letter can we come to understand the spirit; only when we have appropriated and mastered all that tradition can offer us in the way of guidance can we safely go forth as pioneers on our own initiative.

To despise the proffered help of law, authority, and tradition is to mistake feebleness for power, and eccentricity for personality; it is to forget that, in order of genesis, the more common must precede the more special and individual characteristics and qualifications. On the other hand, the servile treat authority as an end in itself and not as an instrument of life, nor as essentially subordinate to the development of personality; they view society as a brainless, soulless "leviathan," not as a communion of free intelligences.

From the obedience of our Lord we can learn the truth as to law and authority on the one side, as to life and liberty on the other.

He was obedient from first to last, from the crib to the Cross. Yet we may, under another aspect, divide His life, roughly, into periods of

obedience and disobedience, the former comprising the years preceding, the latter, those following His baptism by John, although each of these periods was plentifully interspersed with episodes characteristic of the other. Needless to say, the disobedience we speak of was merely apparent, and relative to the undue pretensions of earthly authority. In itself it was the highest, the most intelligent, and the most costing form of obedience; it was obedience to that Divine authority of Conscience from which, solely, all other obedience gets its moral value and so is distinguished from mere servility or prudent concession from self-interested motives. It was the obedience of countless apostles, prophets, martyrs, and confessors, who have chosen "to obey God rather than men," who, just because they were so truly and intelligently obedient to human authority, understood its precise limits, and knew when to withstand its false pretensions.

"A fault on the right side" is the defence alleged in favour of those whose eagerness for the rights of authority makes them deaf to all suggestions of its limits; who seek a short-sighted remedy for the long-standing evil of licence in an overdose of its antidote. Nor do they understand that such overdosing in the past is responsible for the existing reaction. Credulity is often preferred to scepticism by a precisely similar fallacy. Yet what is more evident than that credulity, in giving the honours of faith to what is not of faith, insidiously saps the very foundations of faith and

prepares the way for wholesale negation? So, too, the obedience that exceeds the rights of authority is a bastard obedience, inspired by some other motive or principle than the only right one; and, because it falsifies the true relation between subject and ruler, it thereby imperils the foundation of law and order, and paves the way for absolutism on one side and anarchy on the other.

From the first period of our Saviour's life we learn the rights, from the second, the limits of human authority. He who for thirty years was subject to Joseph and Mary at Nazareth died on the Cross as a rebel and an outlaw, and was "numbered with the transgressors."

If the details of the "hidden life" are few, they are certainly significant in the testimony they bear to our Saviour's reverence for use and wont, for law and custom; to His desire to "fulfil all justice," even where exemption might have been reasonably claimed. It is only the apocryphal gospels that paint His early years, in the Docetan interest, as gaudy with portents and marvels, as abounding in instances of precocity and waywardness. The faith of the canonical Evangelists was not thus ashamed of the Word made flesh, of Him who grew as really in wisdom and grace as He grew in stature, who, as He was true and perfect man, was also true babe and true boy, nor shrank from the virgin's womb and the lowly processes through which we are made and fashioned by the Divine hands. And if it was fitting that He, who should later command the winds and the seas, and

bend Nature to His service beyond the wont of man, should thus, for the greater part of His mortal life, be subject to Nature's laws, so was it becoming that He, who in the moral order was to rise above all human law at the bidding of Conscience and to set at defiance every other will than the Divine, should teach us, through long years of example, the rights, even as afterwards He was to teach us the limits of human authority. For all human authority, even the highest and most sacred, has got its limits of quality and extension; to God and God alone could submission, pure and simple, be rendered without any duties of consideration and reserve.

He who respected the lawful adjuration of the High Priest, and spoke when so commanded, could not, in speaking, speak other than the truth, or yield to the accusation of blasphemy, or to the terrors of that certain excommunication by which He became "a stranger to His brethren and an alien unto His mother's children."

But, preceding the bitter baptism of that most costing obedience, to which, before men, the name, the shame, and all the penalties of disobedience were attached, there were long years of the quieter and sweeter obedience under Joseph and Mary at Nazareth—years when to "increase in favour with God" was at the same time to increase in favour with men. Once only, as it were by a foreshadowing of future trouble, is the steady flow of those peaceful days broken by a momentary ripple, designed almost to reveal to us the common

secret of the present calm and of the coming storm. For as in Nature it is the same force of gravitation that raises and stills the waves, so it is the same understanding of the notion of authority—its rights and its limits—that makes the just man as firm in his disobedience as in his obedience.

The statement that, on His return to Nazareth, our Lord was subject to His parents indicates, on the part of the Evangelist, a consciousness that he has just been recording an instance of seeming insubordination, and desires to correct any false inference that might be drawn from it. Undoubtedly, as narrated, the conduct of the boy Jesus in thus remaining behind in Jerusalem, without a word of warning to His parents, was not accordant with the general ideals of childlike obedience, nor, plainly, with His own accustomary habits of affectionate and dutiful consideration, as Mary's words indicate: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." His answer shows us clearly that here we have an episode, characteristic of the second period of His life, breaking in upon the first: "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"—as though He would say: Did you not know that nothing could draw Me aside from the beaten tracks of use and wont, of law and order, except some special behest of Him who is above, because He is the source of, all law and order. It was then one and the same Divine

Will that made Him obedient to them and disobedient, that recognised their authority within its limits, and disregarded it outside its limits; that separated Him from them to their sorrow and perplexity, and re-united Him to them to their joy and consolation.

Later, the same stern voice of duty was to call Him away permanently from the level and easy track to the steep and rugged path that sloped up to Calvary; from the quiet workshop of Joseph, from the peaceful rhythm of domestic, social, and religious observances, honoured and loved and obeyed as the Divine Will, to the business of His Heavenly Father, to the purging, destroying, and re-building of the violated Temple, to the resistance of lawless authority in the interests of lawful authority; to that disobedience to man which was obedience to God—obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross.

II

If now we would study our Saviour's idea of obedience, we need only remind ourselves of what He has said on the subject of authority—for the two notions are correlative, and are to be explained by one another.

"I will not now call you servants," says Christ to His disciples, "because the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But I have called you friends; because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you."

This, then, is the kind of authority which Christ exercises over His followers, asking in return, not a mechanical, unintelligent execution of mysterious orders, but a cordial, clear-sighted, sympathetic co-operation with the aims He sets before them.

To the modern individualistic spirit the very name of obedience is as distasteful as its correlative, authority; and this dislike has grown to a great extent from the seed of that materialistic conception of the universe, which prevailed a short time ago and lives on into our own time. Just as this system builds up matter and life, body and soul, out of atoms, explaining the higher by the lower and making the less the parent of the greater, so too it furnishes a parallel conception of society as a mere mechanism, a self-interested association of independent units, bound to one another merely by contract, obeying only because and so long as it is their own interest to obey; that is, not really obeying at all, not doing the will of another, but, in an indirect fashion, their own.

Now in such a society, which is of the nature of a joint-stock company, no member cares for the general gain except so far as he gets a bigger share in the proceeds; he does not rejoice in the advantage of his fellow-members, but asks only what profit will accrue thereby to himself. If he has what is called *esprit de corps*, it is not of the kind that would lead him to forfeit his own eventual and permanent gain for the general honour and advantage. He sacrifices his liberty

and submits to common regulations just as he takes his share in the ill-luck or failure of the concern, because he is bound to do so by the contract he has accepted, ultimately, in his own interest. Such obedience is illiberal and slavish; it is not inspired by a preference of the general good to one's own, nor by reverence and love for some greater whole, whereof each one of us is but a dependent part.

This view of human society, and of the corresponding elements of obedience and authority, is absolutely incompatible with that vital, organic view, which is sanctioned by Christian revelation and confirmed by the highest teaching of natural reason. The independent, non-social individual —the human atom so to say—is an idle abstraction; and to accommodate ourselves to the exigencies of this atomic philosophy we should have to sacrifice, not only obedience, but unselfishness and reverence and charity and every Christ-like virtue. Christianity may, and easily can, come to terms with any sanely conceived democracy, but not with the democracy of Rousseau and his social contract.

We cannot, therefore, possess any vital understanding of obedience in the Christian sense, unless we hold likewise to the Christian conception of human society, as being, not a dead aggregate, a mere heap of separate grains, but a living organism, of which each member lives and thinks and strives primarily for the general welfare, of which his own private welfare is at once

an essential constituent and an instrument or means.

Authority is but the dominant right of the whole organism against any undue self-assertion of the part; and obedience is but the free subjection of the part to the interests of the whole, wherein its greatest interest, though not directly sought, is essentially included. In this sense obedience is a knightly as opposed to a commercial virtue, for the true knight fights not for his own share of the spoil, nor even for his own share of the glory, but for the glory of his country and for the honour of God and His Church. And, indeed, the greater glory of God and the greater happiness of man are but as two names for the general welfare.

According to this Christian conception of social authority and subjection no man is to command, nor is he to be obeyed, in virtue of any personal privilege or qualification, but simply as acting in the name of the whole body. The ruler, as ruler, *represents* the whole; the subject, as subject, *represents* but a part, but were he not also in some manner the whole he would have no reason for preferring the general will to his own private desires. So far as ruler and subject alike represent the whole which dwells in them, their interest is identical; authority on the one side and obedience on the other imply the recognition of that identity.

Hence both liberty and dignity are sacrificed by the mere "contract" view of society, according to which man obeys his fellow-men,

not for the sake of all, but for his own private advantage, and because he is too weak to get on without them. This self-styled freedom is, in its essence, slavery and nothing else; it is the unwilling subjection of member to member, of the weaker to the stronger; selfish in its beginning and selfish in its end. Apart from the Christian and rational conception of authority and obedience human liberty perishes, while right and duty become synonyms respectively for strength and weakness, riches and poverty, craft and simplicity.

These principles, which apply to society as a whole, apply also to every form of association which claims an unselfish end and motive: above all, to such associations as exist for a purely religious purpose. Here, too, there is no individual superiority, no personal infallibility. Those words, so often quoted, "He who hears you, hears Me," must be taken, not in a primary, but in a derived sense. He who uttered them gave thereby to His Apostles no mere official delegation, but a full measure of His own spirit, by which they became His representatives in virtue of spiritual likeness and not of a mere legal fiction. They too, like Him, were to be no sheep-drovers, urging their flocks to market, but true shepherds, going before their sheep, drawing them after, winning their consent with the music of gentle reasonableness, by the magnetic power of personal example.

In the ordinary exercise of authority, whether

civil, natural, or religious, there is no guidance by miraculous inspiration, no "Divine right of kings"; a society is formed more or less spontaneously, and gets its authority in virtue of its existence. Wherever there is a moral right, there is the will of God. If to have rights makes the ruler to be God in a certain measure, it also makes the subject God, for he too has his rights. Authority is put forth in the name of the whole, and obedience is rendered in the interests of the whole. Not that the advantage of the subject is to be disregarded either by himself or by those over him, but that the ultimate reason for obeying at all is to be found in those deepest interests which are common to the individual and to all mankind. If our trust in God's Providence, as manifested through finite authority, is not to be disappointed, it must be grounded on an enlightened and unselfish conception of our relation, as individuals, to the whole. Mistakes and blunders, nobly endured, will work together for the good of the subject and of the whole body, but only in so far as the subject shall renounce his immediate advantage for the sake of that good which he can ultimately share with all. We are sometimes told that we shall not be allowed to suffer through obedience to an unjust command, because God will over-rule all to our good. Let us not think from this that any miracle will be wrought, nor that we shall find any private reward for our submission. When we submit to an unjust or mistaken exercise of authority, be-

cause it is evidently our duty to do so, we shall not receive a selfish gratification in reward of our unselfish action, but our gain will be in the love itself, by which we sacrifice our private interests to the general good, and thus enter into fuller union with our fellow-men and with God. He, indeed, can bring good out of evil, truth out of error, because He, and He alone, rightly estimates and truly loves both the individual and the universe, the part and the whole.

We see, then, how morbid and mistaken is the tendency to prefer passive and mechanical to active and intelligent obedience. Here it is that the military comparison is often pushed to such hurtful consequences. Like martial law, unreasoning, unthinking, machine-like obedience is absolutely necessary on critical emergencies in almost every form of government, and, like many other plain, lowly duties, may at times need heroic self-conquest. Most of all is it needed when masses of men have to act together suddenly and simultaneously, as in military operations. Just so far, therefore, as an army is a physical force or sum of forces must it be governed like a machine, but in the measure that its work demands thought and adaptation and strategy, a more sympathetic and intelligent obedience is required. Mechanical obedience must be confined to the fields of action in which it is required, and sternly excluded from the more spiritual domain. Even when we think it right

to obey tyrannical or mistaken orders, our obedience must not be of this passive and mechanical sort, but free and spiritual, because rendered on a motive that is enlightened and reasonable, though the command be not so.

Undoubtedly a system of government, which encourages this mechanical or military obedience, is extremely successful up to a certain point, and its negative advantages are great. It simply effaces certain difficulties and removes the possibility of certain faults. With a due amount of crushing all children can be made "good"; so, too, most men can be prevented from causing exterior trouble and scandal. But who shall estimate the corresponding loss both to the individual and to society?

Self-direction, spontaneity, initiative are the end of all wise government and direction, which should trust mainly to the inward spirit, to the unwritten law of love, and not to the strength of any external system. No organisation, however splendid, can atone for inferiority or worthlessness in the matter organised. When the subject who obeys is a spiritual and intelligent being, he must obey according to his nature, just as he must act in all things according to his nature. This is why we are told that the highest obedience includes both will and judgment, thought and action—it does not wait to be propelled, but anticipates the demands that may be made on it. Such a system of government and obedience is removed, as far as light is

removed from darkness, from the secret-society government, where each man knows only his right-hand neighbour, and does, at the bidding, deeds whose end and purpose are unknown to him. In such societies, wherein the life and mind and will of the whole are not shared by the parts, there can be no true loyalty or interest or spontaneity. But in a truly spiritual government any divorce between obedience of action and obedience of thought becomes, not so much criminal, as illogical, since the only reason we have for obeying is also the reason why we think it right to do so, and any honest doubt on the matter should, if sufficiently urgent, absolve us from outward as well as inward conformity. Not but that we may sometimes, as we have seen, submit to a foolish prescription for reasons of a higher good, but our actual *obedience* must still proceed, in such a case, from an entire conviction of the very real good to which it is directed, and be thus interior as well as exterior. We submit to the inconveniences, we bear the discomforts of this outer conformity; but nothing touches that inviolable principle of liberty, which needs no saving because it is always safe.

This kind of free and spiritual obedience is as hard of exercise as every other action which is truly free. Those who criticise it, little realise that they themselves are often as rigidly, as blindly obedient to the modern spirit as their more extravagant opponents may be to the prin-

ciples of medievalism. The love of liberty is not a prerogative of Liberals any more than of Conservatives; it is rather in their outer interpretation of it that they differ; and we find the so-called advocates of freedom as zealous as any autocrat in forcing their theories, to the neglect of the liberty of others.

A certain measure of subjection is the law of all mankind. According to the aims, higher or lower, which each one pursues, will be the nature of that subjection, nobler and more spiritual for the higher ends, baser and more material for more earthly ends.

"What difference is there betwixt trolls and men?" asked the Troll-king of Peer Gynt, and it was in their respective attitude to the objective, and to the world outside self, that he was told to find that difference:

> "Out yonder, under the shining vault,
> Among men the saying goes: 'Man, be thyself.'
> At home, here with us, 'mid the tribe of the trolls,
> The saying goes: *Troll, to thyself be—enough.*"

Which means that unbridled subjectivism is what separates the "troll" from the man—the mad from the sane—mere aspiration from fulfilment —fancy from reality. Peer Gynt has, as he thinks, *done* a thing so soon as he has *aspired* to the doing of it: his kingdom is within himself, and the outer world but a figment of his fancy. But the final penalty is the loss of that very self in which alone he found his glory and his joy.

We *cannot* be "enough" to ourselves, but must perforce live for and in the rest of the universe. In our free enlightened submission to this inevitable law shall we find both God and man, and ourselves along with them.

CHAPTER VII

"IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD"

As in the Sermon on the Mount we have a sort of summary and typical specimen of all the subsequent teaching of Christ, so, in the history of His trial in the desert, the specific temptations, attendant on His Messianic office and pursuing Him more or less in various forms throughout the period of His ministry, take visible shape, and are exemplified for us in certain individual examples, thus providing us with a key to the story of His life, passion, and death.

The question as to whether the interest and meaning of these temptations is Messianic or human; whether, that is, they characterise His office as Christ or His nature as man—that divine sonship which is His alone, or that divine sonship which He shares with us—may be dismissed in a word. They are, in kind, the temptations which mark the life of every Christ-like man, of all the saints and prophets and martyrs, in the measure that they approximate towards that unattainable ideal that was realised in Him alone; and in the measure that they are brought into contact with the powers of

evil, with the rulers of the darkness of this world. "He was tempted in all points *like as we are*," saving that he did not yield, and so was spared those special temptations that follow upon the violation of conscience. To yield is to escape from the more intolerable degrees of pressure that only the stronger can endure. That He did not yield does not mean that He did not feel, but that He felt more than had He yielded. To say otherwise were to fall into the Docetan heresy; to make the truth of His humanity into a lie; to deny that the Word was made flesh.

His temptations therefore are those, not of man as such, but of man as divine; not of human weakness, but of human strength; of those who have seen the heavens opened and the spirit descending, and who have heard the voice of the Heavenly Father acknowledging them as His well-beloved sons. Speaking roughly, temperance or self-restraint is the difficulty of the strong, as fortitude is of the weak. Christ in the desert gives us an example, not of external powers overcome, but of internal powers curbed and controlled. He, who has divine might and wisdom at beck and call, refrains from the use of them that He may conquer, as man, with such weapons only as grace puts into the hands of us all, that so He may share in, and compassionate our infirmity. Yet He is tempted, not as weak men, but as strong men are tempted—tempted to an abuse or misuse of strength—and he comes

forth victorious by hiding, not by manifesting, Himself; by suffering and inaction, not by action.

There is a growing fashion of philosophy which raves against the Christian ideas of meekness and ascetic self-repression; which will hear of no restraint in the vigorous exercise of all our faculties alike; which would sate the eye with seeing, the ear with hearing, the mind with knowledge, the heart with joy and gladness; which would strike its loudest music from each and every note in the human soul, nor suffer one to be silent and meaningless. Nor is this necessarily a gospel of bestiality, a doctrine of devils, to be condemned at first hearing before its underlying germ of truth has been saved. As a revolt against certain pessimistic and enervating distortions of Christian ethics, it is a wild protest of the stifled soul in the interests of life, of energy, of self-expansion at all costs. Moreover, it is right in assuming that no faculty can be used wrongly so long as it is exercised according to its own laws and in the measure of its own strength. Sin begins when the strength of a lower power is perversely re-enforced by that of a higher, which becomes its servant instead of its master, and which, instead of using it, is used by it. Wild beasts, the proverbial "ape and tiger" symbols of lust and cruelty, are incapable of excess, so far as their life is sentient and nothing more; if man can exceed, it is because he plays the ape and tiger with his spiritual mind, because he can press

reason into the service of his passions, and thus extend their range at the expense of the spirit so enslaved. By this inversion of their due relationship both flesh and spirit take hurt from one another, the former, because it is driven faster and harder than its strength will allow, and is subjected to a strain beyond its nervous capacity; the latter, because its attention, interests, and energies are narrowed and tied down to a plane in which its best capabilities are necessarily sterilised. Gigantic lusts and moral monstrosities are the inevitable progeny of this unhallowed commerce between the sons of God and a nature lower than their own.

To one, therefore, who looked on with full understanding at the temptation of Christ in the desert, the question would have been, not "Will He conquer His natural weakness?" but, "Will He restrain and control His supernatural strength?" Will He be patient with the infirmity of the flesh, or will He impatiently press the powers of the spirit into its service? Will He abide obediently in the elected lowliness and helplessness of His manhood, or will He grasp anew at what He has voluntarily laid aside and locked up out of His reach? Will He break through His self-imposed limitations, and call divine omnipotence and omniscience to His aid, and summon the thronging legions of His ministering angels?

If, as has been said, temptations of this kind were persistent throughout the whole period of

His ministry, as is implied by the words, "Then the devil leaveth Him *for a little while*"; if they culminated and were finally vanquished only in the crisis of His death; yet it was natural that they should manifest themselves acutely and definitely at the moment of His Baptism, of His public consecration to the Christly office, when the conviction of His Divine Sonship had been brought home with a new supernatural vividness to His human consciousness, and had become a sort of overmastering possession, driving Him forth into the spiritual desert of this God-forsaken world among the wild beasts, to a life of solitude, fasting and prayer, and to a death of ignominy.

He is not tempted, we may easily gather, to any scepticism as to the reality of His office and mission, for He has just been filled to overflowing with the sense of His Sonship. That is a temptation which may better assail our faltering consciences. We may well fear illusion and fanaticism, and question whether it is not some subtle vanity that makes us fancy ourselves singled out for a special mission; whether we do not overrate rather than underrate our powers. Thousands are wholly or partly deceived in that direction for one who is deceived in the other. No, it is not the fact of His Sonship, but the rights and duties of His Sonship; not His possession of supernatural strength, but the use and exercise of that strength, that offers occasion of temptation to our Lord. "If," that is, "Since,

Thou art the Son, bid these stones be made bread."

It is because He knows that He is the Son of God, called to suffer and die in the service of God's kingdom over souls, that the saint or prophet strips himself of a thousand indulgences lawful for others, and goes forth in poverty and austerity, not having whereon to rest his head. And it is after He has fasted forty days, after prolonged self-denial and victory over nature, that, in some unguarded moment of weariness, when, through its very dependence on the fainting flesh, the spiritual vision is dimmed and all ideals seem flat, stale, and unprofitable, that sudden temptation rushes upon Him. "Does Sonship really demand such cruel sacrifices? Is not the voice of Nature, too, the voice of God? Is not her command more clear, more imperative, more ancient and universal, than the obscure whisperings of conscience? Is it not God Himself, the pitiful Father, who knows that we have need of these things, who clothes the lilies, and guards the sparrows, and feeds the young ravens? is it not He who has spread this table in life's desert for my refreshment? Stones! What has made them stones but my own stubborn will, my self-imposed restriction, this cold, unnatural asceticism that has killed half of life's values for me? and in the interests of what? Why should not these stones be bread for me once more, as they are for all sensible men? What hinders it but my will? Am I not a son

of God? Am I not free? For what end has this freedom been given to me?"

From this trial of all His followers He surely was not exempt who called on them to take up their cross and come after Him. He is anti-Christ who denies that Jesus has come of the flesh, and that His nature is consubstantial with our own; who denies that there must have been many another bitter hour than that of His agony in Gethsemane, in which the sensitive soul cried out against the sacrifices imposed by the Divine Will; hours of physical depression and weariness, when the innocent consolations of home life, of affection and friendship, of a tranquil existence, of freedom from care and responsibility must have tempted Him to limit His spiritual aspirations and to serve Heaven on a lower plane. The words of the scorner, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross," but gave voice to the abiding temptation of His whole mortal life. From first to last it was His own will that bound Him to the cross of duty, and that could at any moment have loosed Him; that drove Him forward to the tragedy of Calvary, and that could as easily have held Him back; that, for Him, turned the pleasant bread of human happiness into hard stones, and that could, by the magic of a single word or wish, have restored it to its natural condition and use.

He does not argue nor parley with the temptation. It is vain to reason when the inward eye is troubled and the memory of past intuitions

enfeebled. He takes the shield of faith, the sword of the spirit, the word of God; He trusts blindly to the larger intuitions of the heart, nor heeds the sophistries of the sense-troubled understanding. "It is written," Faith proclaims it: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

By bread indeed, but not by bread alone. For even Christ's shoulder had been unequal to the weight of His cross, had not His body been nourished and rested and refreshed by the gifts of Nature. Many a joy lit up the face of the Man of Sorrows; many a sunbeam broke through the storm-clouds that shadowed His days. If there were enemies, there were also friends; if defeats, there were also victories; else He had not known *human life*, of which, though in varying proportions, these contrasts are essentially characteristic. But the craving for the bread of this lower life can never be the sovereign rule of conduct for the sons of God, for man as a spiritual being. There is a higher life to which it must be ministrant and subordinate, and which is sustained by another Bread, the Bread of the Divine Will, of "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "I have a meat that ye know not of: My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to perfect His work." "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth to everlasting life." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and the justice thereof, and all these things shall be added

unto you." "For your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things." In itself the lower is good and may be sought without limit, till it conflicts with a higher that is better, and then it becomes evil. Most sin is really of this relative character. What is right and natural in a child, is wrong in a man, is "childishness." What is right for the less, is wrong for the more developed conscience and intelligence, for him who has seen more, to whom more has been given. Conscience is the upward impulse of the growing spirit; sin is the deliberate preference of outgrown conditions, of the easier and safer-seeming way, of the old well-trodden paths of least resistance, of what was, perhaps, once right for ourselves, and that may still be right for many others; sin seeks to live by bread alone, exclusively, without measure; and not chiefly by the food of the Word that proceeds from God's own mouth, wherewith He feeds us as a bird feeds her nestlings.

If faith is to be our shield against the false verdicts of sense and carnal reason—faith in the deeper, wider, and fuller vision of our whole spiritual being in its moments of exaltation and clearer intuition, faith in the super-reality of things not seen, in the non-reality of things that appear—yet this very faith itself can be turned to a source of more spiritual temptation, can be corrupted into fanaticism, one of the besetting dangers of the prophetic and apostolic vocation. It is to this faith that the tempter appeals when

he suggests that Christ should cast Himself down from the pinnacle: "*It is written* that He shall give His angels charge over thee:" reason and experience may doubt it, but God has said it, and faith trusts boldly, blindly, in season and out of season. Shall the Son of God condescend to human prudence and calculation? Are supernatural ends to be realised by natural means? Are the sons of God, the children of light, to be wise with the carnal wisdom, strong with the earthly strength of the sons of men, the children of this generation?

This is not, as might seem, an occasional temptation of some, but a persistent temptation of all—one which follows faith as its shadow, and strengthens with its strength—a fact which explains the frequent and practical sterility of the greatest souls and the richer results obtained by spiritual mediocrity. It is because faith, in its excess, makes real and almost sensible the great things of eternity, because it shrouds things of time in a haze of dreaminess and unreality, and dwarfs them to triviality and insignificance, that the sons of God are tempted, in the measure of their faith, to feel that nothing matters at all but the one thing necessary; that they have no need of the meat that perisheth, but only of the meat that endureth; that natural means and natural precautions can be neglected, and that Providence will step in with a miracle if need be. Nay, they will call this "holy confidence," "childlike im-

providence," and will count it honour to God and merit to themselves to go out of their way to scorn the laws of prudence and reason. Whereas a feebler faith, a less ideal temperament, to which time is more substantial and eternity more shadowy, will abound in common-sense and practical judgment, and will never dream of trusting Providence till every natural method has failed.

Yet it is not written: "They shall bear thee up, if thou cast thyself down," but "if perchance thou dash thy foot against a stone," if, after all due care and watchfulness against temptation, thy foresight, being but human, should fail, thine eye should wander.

It is impossible but that our Lord must have been tempted continually to a sort of recklessness of confidence in the unseen, of contempt for the apparent, to an impatience with the slow methods of nature, with the cumbersome exigencies of prudence and common-sense, with the obligation of economising His energies, and not wasting His life and strength before the appointed hour. He must often have longed to precipitate that final catastrophe instead of waiting till it was plainly forced upon Him in the pre-ordained course of Providence; to cast Himself down at once that God might raise Him up again from the grave, and set Him more speedily at His right hand, triumphant over death. Was not this what He meant when He said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am straitened till it be

accomplished!" and again, "I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer"?

Yet another temptation of the spiritually great and strong, of the mighty sons of God! a temptation that has dragged the highest of them down, with Lucifer, Son of the Morn, to the nethermost pit, in awful ruin. "This people have sinned a great sin," cried Moses to the God of Israel, "and have made them gods of gold; yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written" (Ex. xxxii. 31). "I could wish," says Paul, "that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 3). The strong instinct of self-sacrificing, self-destroying maternal love finds its spiritual archetype in God Himself, and therefore by necessity in the sons of God, in the measure that they are possessed by His divine spirit. The passionate love of their spiritual progeny, whom they have brought forth in tears, whom they have fostered with their heart's blood, blinds them to all due self-regard, and would, if unrestrained, drive them to self-defeating extravagances fatal to the very purposes they would serve. Was His a calmer and more calculating love than that of Moses or Paul, Who wept over the city whose children He would fain have gathered as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing; Who saw prophetically, in her ruined splendour, but the symbol of that devastated kingdom of God, of that soul-world of all

humanity which He had come to redeem by suffering death and defeat at its hands, for which it was, in some sense, His very vocation to be accursed and to be blotted out of the book of life?

Not once, but ceaselessly were the realms of this sin-ridden soul-world, with all their possibilities of glory, spread out before His inward gaze. "All these will I give thee," whispered sin, "for they are mine by easy conquest, by willing submission. Why purchase them at the cost of blood and suffering, your own and that of legions of martyrs, when you can have them as a gift, or at a mere nominal price, so infinitely much for so infinitely little. What is one soul against millions? will not the mother perish for her brood by a divine instinct? Is your own spiritual instinct less Divine? Or if for the moment, in justice, God must blot you from His book and make you accursed from His face, will not His mercy quickly snatch you up out of hell and set you by His right hand, and crown you with glory and honour?"

Essential as is the alliance between morality and spiritual religion, nothing shows their irreducible distinctness better than the conflicts that often arise between their claims. No moralist but echoes the Pauline anathema on those who would do evil that good may come, who justify sinful means by holy ends. But religion apprehends conscience less as a principle, or even as a spiritual faculty, than as a divine Personality and

Will other than our own; it relates us by ties of love and concord to a whole universe of personalities, whereof this indwelling Conscience-God is Source, Centre, and End. As thus involving feeling and spiritual passion, it can rise in revolt at times against the painful exactions of stern duty, and can cloud the purity of our moral vision in the same way as can less noble emotions. When so disproportionally intense as thus to burst through the bonds of morality and reason, religion is converted into fanaticism, and perishes through its own strength, or through the relative weakness of its restraining force. The temptation to do evil that good may come, to prevent wide-reaching sin and scandal, to secure some extensive triumph for the Kingdom of God at the cost of one's own soul, by some sacrifice of principle offered to the Devil, is one that presses hard on the sons of God, just in the measure that their religious spirit, their zeal for God's glory and man's good is strong and consuming; nor can it be withstood save by a proportionate strengthening of the "moral passion" for truthfulness and justice. There is no degradation of Christianity so deplorable, no corruption so fœtid and revolting, as that which obtains to-day in some nominally Christian countries, through a once wholly genuine but now blindly unscrupulous and fanatical zeal for the greater glory of God. And yet it is a cold and narrow heart that has never felt the temptation acutely, that is not continually haunted by it. There are many in

whom the moral sense is relatively strong, and the religious and humanitarian sense weak, or almost entirely lacking; to whom conscience presents itself as an impersonal, though mysteriously imperative principle, rather than as an object of supreme worship and personal love. And there are those whose religion is thriftily self-regarding and commercial, to whom the temptation to sacrifice a single merit, to incur a farthing's debt for the souls of others, is inconceivable; who would not risk wetting their feet to snatch another from drowning. It is therefore a temptation of the strong, of man so far as he has something divine in him that makes him a son of God, some spark of disinterested universal love.

And yet of all temptations it is the foulest; the one that most evidently marks the devil disguised as an angel of light; that most rudely wakes the slumbering conscience to energetic protest: "Get thee behind me, Satan;" one that calls for a quick thrust of the sword of the spirit, a prompt interposition of the shield of faith: "*It is written*, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Never indeed is faith in our moral intuitions more needed; for though *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum* is written, as an axiom, in the consciences of all and confessed by the lips of all, it is as universally denied in practice; reason is sceptical about it, experience will not bear it out. We *feel* that it ought to be true, must be true, but we cannot *see*

that it is so. Do we not often find good and intelligent men pointing out the blessings that, under Providence, have come to the Church from this or that departure from principle, which seemed at the time to be disastrous; thus proving that sin was fertile of good? Would it not be as easy for them to trace the immense evil that has resulted from intransigent fidelity to principle, and that opportunism might have prevented? In truth, the world is not yet so arranged that right acts and wrong are those which will be most fruitful in the general interests of right or wrong respectively. Their further results may be of the same character as themselves, or of the opposite character, and are, more usually, of both. We have no business with such a calculus of possible utilities when the character of the act in itself is clearly right or clearly wrong. We may not ask to see the distant scene, but must suffer ourselves to be led on blindfold, step by step, by the firm hand of conscience. This is indeed a hard saying; who can bear it?

He alone bore it to the utmost Who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

CHAPTER VIII

"THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS"

I

It has been said that one of the most victorious achievements of the devil, in these latter days, is to have brought about the denial of his own existence. Perhaps, however, mere scepticism as to the person of the devil would have less practical importance were it not that, along with the person, the modern mind is disposed likewise to reject the principle personified, to deny not only the devil but also his words and his works. Leaving aside for the moment all that concerns his person and his history, and regarding him only from the merest symbolical point of view, we find that he stands for the entire scheme of external as opposed to self-caused temptation, and represents the principle of *otherness* and the existence of *personality* on the side of evil in our spiritual warfare.

There is a tendency of the modern mind to deny or ignore personal agencies other than those clothed in visible flesh and blood, to regard God as a mere personification of goodness and wisdom working themselves out in the world and in

human conduct, and, still more, to view the devil as a convenient symbol of mere abstract error and wickedness. This tendency owes its birth, at least in part, to a revolt against base and unworthy representations of God, on the part of those who are apt to forget that the human images and language in which our ideas of spiritual beings are expressed are in some sense metaphorical, in every sense inadequate. Still more in regard to the powers of evil, where the check of reverence is wholly absent, and where contempt and dislike strive for their fullest expression, is there a tendency, on the part of the ignorant and simple, to make Christian demonology grotesque and incredible. And yet, were we to endeavour to put aside all the ideas and all the terms that are ordinarily used in the treatment of the subject, we should find ourselves without any means of expressing certain facts of experience, which are covered conveniently, if at times too amply and grossly, by belief in the devil and in demons.

When we recognise the unity of all creation, visible and invisible, when we realise, however inadequately, the working of mind on mind, the subtle influence for good or evil of every soul on its fellows, we are fain to acknowledge the existence of some kind of spiritual suggestion, whether hidden or manifest, more especially some sort of underground emotional and affective sympathy that tends spontaneously to incorporate itself in mental images and conceptions, which

seem, in consequence, to be like the utterances of some other personality than our own, of some spirit by which we are possessed, which uses our mind, our imagination, our very organism for ends other than and counter to our own.

It is impossible, at least in the present state of our knowledge, to define the how and the whence of the various influences at work upon us, to judge how far they are dependent on conscious communications, how far independent thereof; but this much is certain, that effects are wrought in us by powers that are not ourselves, and that, try as we may, we can never dissociate ourselves, inwardly any more than outwardly, from the life of other spiritual beings. We can, perhaps, more easily exclude from our senses the outer words and deeds of other men than we can exclude from our deepest soul the reverberations of their unspoken thoughts and feelings. Whether we are thus affected only by those we know, and whether those influences are all human, or whether other beings have likewise their share therein, are questions on which philosophy can as yet give no definite confirmation of the beliefs of religion; but at all events there is a growing group of observed facts calling for this or for some equivalent explanation. The Church has her own teaching on the subject—a teaching whose experienced fruitfulness as a guide to spiritual life is warrant for its analogous correspondence to the mysteries of the unseen world; but the chief

point of practical importance in that teaching[1] is the recognition of an alien element in certain temptations and experiences.

It is to be regretted that the devil has been so freely and uncritically invoked to account for all kinds of phenomena, which in no way require the intervention of a foreign personality. When he is made responsible for impulses, faults, and failings which are quite easily explained by the weakness of our own nature, it becomes more difficult to discern those cases in which we really need to recognise some principle of otherness. The Church teaches us to take full responsibility on ourselves for our sins, to say at the end of our confession, "*Mea* culpa, *mea* maxima culpa," and this healthy sense of our own freedom is weakened, and our energy relaxed, when we begin to shift so much of the blame from our own guilty shoulders to those of that unseen tempter, whose face we often blacken with our own foulness. Moreover, to mistake the cause of an evil is to put its remedy out of our power. We are exorcising the devil when we should be exorcising our

[1] "Une solidarité qui s'éténd à l'infini nous lie dans l'une come dans l'autre (des deux cités morales qui en ce monde restent entremêlées, et dont Dieu seul sait faire le départ). Le mal que nous commettons, nous ne sommes pas seuls à le commettre ; les méchants nous le suggèrent et y concourent ; et nous ne le commettons pas non plus pour nous seuls. De même en est-il pour le bien.

"Toutes les volontés de mal faire et toutes les volontés de bien faire constituent comme deux puissances antagonistes dont les courants nous traversent et qui font de nous en un sens des instruments."—ABBÉ L. LABERTHONNIÈRE, *Le Réalisme Chrétien*, p. 99.

own ignorance or viciousness. But were we to use greater detachment and moderation in this respect, we should, even by restricting the cases of temptation from foreign causes, more fully apprehend their reality when they actually occur. We should come to recognise with a fuller meaning that our conflict is not merely with "flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers," with the spirits and forces of another world. There is a sense of something beyond and outside ourselves in wickedness as in goodness; there are drawings to evil as to good which have not generated wholly within ourselves, which are not mere self-temptations occasioned by purely natural impulses, called evil only because we so often, though needlessly, turn them to evil; but which derive from other wills than our own, and appeal to our instinctive tendency to agreement and consent with others. Strictly, it is only persons that can tempt us, drawing us to themselves, will to will, as atom is drawn to atom; things, are but occasions of self-temptation.

It happens to us at times to be startled and terrified at a temptation which besets us; there is in it something entirely strange to our nature, something new, unprecedented, unmanageable because unintelligible, and of which we cannot foresee the end just because we did not experience the beginning. Though less dangerous, because it does not spring from and meet the response of our habitual tendencies and sympathies, it may still be more terrifying, in so far as we cannot

gauge the nature and extent of this unknown force which is pressing upon us, and therefore do not know how to take it, how to deal with it. If it be strong enough to affect us thus, may it not also be powerful enough to overcome and prostrate us? As children we had to learn by experience the superiority of the great forces of nature over our own puny powers, and thus to accept our lesson of infirmity. A somewhat similar experience meets us in the spiritual order likewise; whereas we thought ourselves invincible, we are in reality subject to stronger and antagonistic forces in spirit as well as in flesh.

Such an experience may not fall to the lot of all; and some, in fact, are saved from it, just because, having continually cried "wolf," they do not recognise the animal when he appears. Viewing every temptation as preternatural and diabolic, they are not terrified at the unintelligible, as at some other-world portent. But however this may be, and whatever the uncertainty in any concrete case, it remains an irresistible conviction of many an individual mind that our soul is the battle-ground of various and opposing forces, that we are not dragged and solicited by mere laws and principles, but by the action, near or remote, of personal powers, whether manifest or concealed, whether good or bad, whether man, or angel, or devil. Nor need we suppose that such influence, though personal, is always directly diabolic, or is exercised by way of some mystical "telepathy" as it is called. The influence of evil

human wills other than our own, whether living or dead, near or distant, can be brought to bear on us in a thousand subtle, but none the less natural, ways. In literature, in art, in the whole psychological atmosphere of the society in which we move, the influence of evil deeds and evil desires, remote in time and place, lives on and multiplies like microscopic germs, that suddenly infest the receptive soul and reproduce in it the image and likeness of that will from which they originated. If God works upon souls through souls, through the instrumentality of a Church, may we not see in the assembly of the wicked a sort of diabolic Church, through which the temptations of the devil are mediated? Be this as it may, we are tempted, and we feel sometimes that our trouble comes from no remembered past action, from no physical or mental disposition, from no external and visible circumstance, but from some spiritual source outside our conscious selves.

At no conjuncture then do we feel more entirely thrown on the resources of faith for light and guidance and support. We seem to be engaged in a warfare with adversaries hidden and invisible; we know not what may be the extent of their dominion over us, nor what strength we have to oppose to them. We call then on a personal power to aid us in our battle with these adverse personal forces, and to conquer the unseen devil we have recourse to the unseen God.

Not that we can be for long mistaken as to the

essential inviolability of our will—liberty is not its quality but its very essence—but still we are in darkness and incertitude, and we turn of necessity to Him Who alone can gauge the nature and power of our enemy. If the domain of the sub-conscience be liable to invasion from hostile forces, it is nevertheless true that One alone can enter as its rightful and omnipotent master. Duty and right are correlatives, and God alone can touch the most intimate strings of our being, because He alone, saving all that regards our inviolable freedom, is answerable for our welfare, and loses or gains by our final choice and destiny.

If God be then, in this sense, the first and greatest of Telenergists, entering directly where others can only wander around, then Christ has a twofold right of entry into the sub-conscious domain. He influences us directly as God ; He influences us indirectly as man, and human head of the human race. Besides the hidden action of the Divinity there is the hidden action of the Humanity. He is our leader and chief, not only by right of Creatorship, but likewise by right of His mystical headship of all mankind. He exercises over us an influence perfectly human as well as perfectly divine. By sharing our lot He earns a right to modify it, and thus enters into communion with each soul by right of a common humanity.

II

It is clear, then, that as, in regard to our bodily life, besides those ordinary contingencies, which are within our calculation and under our control, there are others, such as storms and earthquakes, pestilences and famines, which seem more wholly in the hands of God, and which may upset all our calculations, so, too, in regard to our spiritual life, there are analogous incalculable influences. Even in the natural order the beliefs, sentiments, sympathies and antagonisms of the society into which we are born constitute a moral and spiritual atmosphere, which determines our inner life more deeply than we are aware; and this atmosphere is liable to storms and disturbances from day to day, whose influence we cannot evade to any great extent. In spite of ourselves we are carried away by waves of popular feeling or opinion, and are in some measure slaves of the time-spirit. If all this can be (as surely it can) without prejudice to our liberty; if what we *are* in the fullest sense is determined, not by what befalls us, or by what is given to us, or by the circumstances with which we have to deal, or by the materials on which we have to work; if it is rather determined by our freely chosen reaction against what befalls, by our self-determined attitude in the face of what is given, by our victory over circumstances, by our skill in the use of materials, then, indeed, liberty is in no-

wise touched by the traditional supposition of mystical influences, good and evil, resulting from our incorporation with an inter-penetrating world of spirits—a supposition which gives unity and meaning to a large class of phenomena otherwise unaccountable.

But that same class is best defined by a consideration of some similar but accountable phenomena, that may easily be confounded with those that belong strictly to the realm of mysticism. There is a very accountable and non-mystical sense in which it may be said that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against spirits of wickedness, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world." For, indeed, those to whom these words were addressed were too apt to fancy that the Christian's warfare was chiefly with "flesh and blood"; that is, with the persecuting Jew or Pagan, with visible foes to be combated or evaded by natural methods, and not rather with inward enemies, with those "fleshly desires that war against the soul," with those unruly spirits, those inordinate lusts and affections which are the true sources and rulers of the darkness of this world, of the mental blindness, the moral chaos and confusion which are the fruit of sin.[1]

For if recent psychology has formulated the

[1] "And what mean," says St. Gregory, "these seven devils but the whole brood of vices? Mary therefore had seven devils in so far as she was filled with all the vices."—S. GREG., *Hom.* 33 *in Evang.*

phenomena more accurately, yet experience had taught men long ago that any strong affection, passion or interest, any masterful hope or fear, like or dislike, can, under certain circumstances, destroy the unity of our inward life, can become the germ of a parasitic independent soul within our soul; that it can feed on our spiritual vitality and grow strong and overbearing, and finally crush the normal self underfoot and reduce it to abject slavery.

Just as the unity of our thought means that it is all consistent with certain fundamental beliefs and principles, and is coherent part with part; so the unity of our whole inward life means that all our intentions and interests and ends are consistent with, and governed by, some one dominating end, interest and affection. What this governing end *ought* to be, religion tells us: "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with thy whole heart" —an end that is to be fulfilled by each of us in his own individual way, according to the variety of his powers, gifts, and circumstances, and by no two of us in altogether the same way. It is for each of us, in the light of such self-knowledge as he possesses, to form some conception of the sort of self that he intends to realise, the sort of character that he can build up out of the materials to hand, the sort of part he can play in life. He must strive, moreover, to adjust this conception ever more accurately to the nature of his given spiritual constitution, to its weaknesses and its strengths, its opportunities and its limita-

tions, so as to aim at getting the very best out of himself. And, as time goes on, experience will come to his aid; and every new stage of self-development which he realises will reveal further possible stages and more comprehensive conceptions of this true self which he has to build up. This true self which we set before us is therefore the governing end, the unifying principle of our inward and spiritual life.

But let some ambition, some resentment, some passion, some fear get hold of us; let us begin to submit ourselves to it passively and to obey its suggestions blindly and lazily, instead of first criticising them and seeing their bearing upon our governing ideal and end, and subjecting them entirely to that end, and at once the unity of our soul is disturbed. Another self has been conceived; a germ of parasitic life has been sown; a foreign spirit has entered secretly into the centre of the soul. Forthwith it begins, seditiously and insidiously, to disturb the general government in its own particular interest, to obtrude itself more and more on our attention, to preoccupy our imagination, to engage our thoughts, to enlist our emotions and energies. Like the true self, like the governing end of our life, it too becomes an independent separate principle of unity, an end round which a whole world of ideas and feelings and purposes gradually clusters, in such sort that each of them is entangled with the rest, and brings the whole connected system into our consciousness along with itself. And as

this false self develops and grows stronger, it leaves less and less room and time for the true self to assert itself within us; it renders that assertion a task of greater effort in the measure that the parasite grows stronger at the expense of the host.

Under the domination of this foreign spirit, by which we have allowed ourselves to become possessed, we are, as we say, "not ourselves." We are often intellectually aware at the time that this is not that self which we want to hold by; that it is not the self of our sane moments, towards which we are now emotionally indifferent, as it were towards an unaccountably estranged friend. Yet for the time being our thoughts and feelings can only work along the lines and according to the connections that have been established by the false self; we can only reason in certain grooves, and feel in certain ways, and remember certain experiences, and see certain sides and aspects of a question. It is as when the barrel of a musical-box is shifted, and a wholly new system of points is brought into connection with the teeth of the comb. But when some shock or change of circumstances delivers us from this state (from which we can hardly deliver ourselves freely when the parasitic self is full-grown and lusty), then are we as a dreamer who wakes, scarce credulous of the reality of what we have been through, which we often remember most obscurely; scarce able to hold our present sane self responsible for the feelings and thoughts

and deeds of that other personality—ours, yet not ours.

Nor are we responsible, except so far as by past negligence we have allowed the alien spirit to be conceived, born and fostered within us, or have not guarded against this particular access and seizure, or repressed it while it was yet in our power to do so. Which of us has not had experience of this sort of alienation or possession at one time or another, or at least of its beginnings and symptoms? Which of us has never cried out: "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?" Nor is it one spirit, but many (it may be in various stages of development) that thus disturb the unity of our inward life, and give usurped and monstrous headship now to this, now to that member of our spiritual organism. Often we are the passive prey of a succession of contradictory moods or spirits; still worse, we are frequently torn asunder by a legion of devils disputing for the possession of our soul at one and the same moment. Were we to make no effort at all at self-training, we should very soon be as a neglected garden, in which a thousand growths run wild and choke one another in their struggle for existence; we should become simply a bundle of separate and conflicting personalities, of which none would have more claim than the rest to be considered the true self.

A good actor is one who so feels his part that he forgets it is play and not earnest, and is so utterly possessed by the self he has assumed that

all his thoughts and emotions and gestures are temporarily absorbed, unified and governed by his rôle. He may play a hundred rôles with the same sincerity, and yet he retains the power of returning to himself, to that rôle which he has chosen for himself in the great and earnest drama of real life. As voluntary and self-controlled, these assumed moods and passions are no prejudice to the unity of his inward life, but are subjected to its general purposes and ends. Not so the man whose rôles are imposed upon him by his disorderly passions and affections and interests, who is the prey now of this spirit, now of that, now of a whole legion together. For by the monstrous growth of some of its members, by the distortion and atrophy of others, the unity of his spiritual organism is gradually broken up into fragments and destroyed beyond recognition, the true self is asserted more and more feebly and rarely, and at last recedes altogether from present consciousness and even from memory. Such a man is not an actor, for he has no self to disguise; he does not assume a rôle, nor can we even say that the rôle assumes him, for there is no "him" in question. He realises that rather shallow definition of a soul or personality—"a series of states of consciousness." He is, or rather there are, as many persons as there are dormant moods and passions, of which his body is but the submissive instrument. His is truly a lost soul, a lost self.

There is madness that derives from physical or

physiological causes, but much that goes by the name of madness is simply an abnormal degree of moral disorder, of what once was too readily called "demoniacal possession." Underneath the crude and brutal practice, now obsolete, of treating every lunatic with violence, lay a germ of experimental truth. Had the rod been used sooner, or, at least, the rod of self-discipline, the disease might often have been prevented: "*Sero medicina paratur cum mala per longas invaluere moras.*"

And against such indwelling "spirits of wickedness and rulers of the darkness of this world," we must arm ourselves with *spiritual* armour, with "the whole armour of God," offensive and defensive, with the shield of faith, the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the spirit. Spirit can be driven out only by some stronger spirit which comes in and takes possession of the dwelling. The house, swept and garnished but unoccupied, will quickly be resumed by its old occupant, reinforced by fiends worse than himself. It was by the infusion of the Holy Spirit—by a counter-possession—that Christ drove forth devils from the possessed; it was by a yet stronger power that He crushed the power of Beelzebub, prince of the devils. It is vain and idle to destroy except by constructing, to pull down save in the process of building up. Let evils be, and let lies abound, lest worse take their place. Only by doing good can evil be effectually undone; only by revealing truth can

falsehood be permanently uprooted. And so to the spirit of unbelief we must oppose a spirit of faith; and to a spirit of despair, or of bitterness, or of falsehood, or of pride, a spirit of confidence, or of sweetness, or of simplicity, or of lowliness.

But complex and cumbersome as all the spiritual armoury may sound in the statement, it admits of a great simplification. As David shook himself free of Saul's panoply, and went forth with only his shepherd's sling and the pebble from the brook against the full-armoured Goliath, and as he prevailed by simplicity and directness, even so can we prevail against the multitude and complexity of our foes by the simplicity of the spirit of Christ, by faith in Christ, by hope and confidence in Christ, by the love of Christ. That is the strong controlling interest which must seize upon our soul, unify it, and reduce every other interest under its own sway; which must become the germ of a new life within us, of a better self than that of which the evil spirits have robbed us. In the poor demoniac, formerly possessed and torn asunder by a whole brood of conflicting devils, but now pacified, restored to self-possession, seated at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, we see a picture of the human soul, and of what Jesus has done for it. Unification is strength; only the love of God in Christ can restore the forfeited unity of our soul. "Be strong," says the Apostle, "*in the Lord* and in the power of His might." "Take unto you the whole armour of

God," that is, take unto you Jesus Christ, for He is the shield of Faith, and He is the girdle of Truth, and He is the breastplate of Righteousness, and He is the Sword of the Spirit, and the Word of God.

CHAPTER IX

"WHAT WILL IT PROFIT?"

In these days, when evolutionary philosophy has been popularised, it is a common but surely a superficial assumption that, when a higher religion supervenes on a lower, there is a substantial identity between the two, and that the difference is only one of form. We compare the event to the unfolding of an organic germ. But in truth the process might rather be called a "transubstantiation"; for to a large extent it is the "accidents," the form, that abide unchanged, and the substance that is altered. Underneath the ancient formularies, rites, and ceremonies, new meanings are quietly inserted, in such wise that what was formerly, at best, the secondary sense, becomes primary, and the realities of the dying creed serve as figures and symbols for its successor. Thus it is not to poetic conception that we owe the human presentment of God in the early Jewish religion, but rather to prophetic inspiration and wisdom that retained the forms of a false religion for the service of the true, and transferred the conventional insignia of divinity from the unlawful claimant to the lawful.

Or again, when we Christians speak of our Lord as the true Christ or Son of David, and of ourselves as the true Israel or seed of Abraham, or of the Gospel of Love as the true Law, we are not "developing," or defining more exactly, the Jewish meaning of these terms, but substituting a different and higher meaning altogether. We say of our Lord all that they said of their Christ, but, though the clothing is the same, the wearer is a totally different being.

Left in his primeval helplessness and darkness, man's worship is abjectly slavish and self-seeking; an appeasing of unknown, incalculable powers that hurt and harm him for no reason at all, or for inadvertent trespassings or unwitting negligences. To escape evil, physical, temporal evil, is all his care; to defend himself against the gods as against the wild beasts with which they are often identified. Later, psychologically, come ideas of protective gods, patrons, allies; of personal offence and its punishment; later still, of rewards, blessings, divine favour and good-will. But whatever be the divinity worshipped, one or many, gross or spiritual, the motive of worship remains self-interested, non-moral, as long as it is dictated purely by fear of punishment and hope of reward; as long as God is conceived to have any other interest than that men should love righteousness because it is righteousness, and hate iniquity because it is iniquity, or to care for any other sacrifice than the *sacrificium justitiæ*.

In the religion or religions, many of whose

forms were appropriated by Christianity, God was conceived as before all else a just and righteous God, rewarding justice, punishing wickedness, whether here or hereafter; using His power, as it were educatively, in the interests of morality, like a parent or tutor dealing with children, whose sense and love of right are as yet dormant or but half awake. Righteousness was one of His attributes or perfections, one of His titles to adoration; one, however, among others, not the sole and sovereign title to which all others were but subordinate and ministerial. But the God, to whom Christ has transferred our worship, is a God who wills, not merely that we should *do* what is right for the sake of rewards however noble and spiritual, but that we should *love* righteousness as He loves it, for its own sake, and because it is the expression of His own nature; that we should be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect.

It might then have been expected that in Christianity we should hear no more of rewards and punishments, that Heaven and Hell, the soul saved and the soul lost, would have become mere symbols of spiritual states: "Heaven but the vision of fulfilled desire, and Hell the shadow from a soul on fire;" or, in the words of A Kempis, "Where Thou art, there is Heaven; and where Thou art not, there is a most grievous Hell." It might have been thought that the higher Faith would not have asked to see the distant scene, to peer through the darkness of

the valley of death's shadow, to follow Dante's steps through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise in quest of moral purification, that it would have gloried in its blindness and disinterestedness. And yet, if the Christian tradition with its juridical and almost commercial categories of merits, penalties, indulgences, belies this expectation, it is not that it has substantially deviated from the teaching of Christ, with its stirring and solemn appeal to the self-interest, even though it be to the spiritual self-interest of man. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" If thy right eye, thy right hand, thy right foot offend thee, pluck it out, cut it off, cast it from thee; for *it is better for thee* to enter into Heaven maimed, than whole to be thrust into Gehenna, with its undying worm, its unquenchable fire.

Yes, this is the language, these are the forms of the older religion, in which righteousness was the means and happiness the end. But it does not follow that, because they are now vehicles of an entirely new, higher and more spiritual sense, their former sense is completely annulled, or that its reality ceases to be reality in becoming also symbolic of a yet deeper reality.

So far as Heaven and Hell stand for the extrinsic results or positive sanctions of our conduct in the future life, our Lord has added nothing to the beliefs of the Jewish Church of His day. We may be sure that, if there was anything gross or materialistic in those concep-

tions, He spiritualised them as He did all others, *e.g.* those connected with the Messiahship or the Kingdom of God; but that He adopted and approved the central, essential thought cannot be doubted—the thought that sin is a "bad bargain," from the lower as well as from the higher standpoint; that our moral sense, our faith in overruling Reason and Justice, demand that every act of *lawless* self-seeking should in the end prove self-defeating; that *we cannot fail in the chief thing without failing in all;* cannot lose our soul and save our body; cannot finally rejoice, unless every part of us be in joy; that if we seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice all other things shall be added to us, but if we seek these other things first, then they too will be taken from us.

That this *ought* to be so is the irrepressible postulate of our moral being; that it *will* be so is the affirmation of blind faith and hope—faith in the God of Conscience, faith in the ultimacy of Right and Reason, faith which has not seen and yet has believed; for, that it *is* not so and never has been so, is the plaint of Job, confirmed by the unvarying testimony of history.

What, however, is manifestly irreconcilable with the mind and spirit of Christ is the idea that any other than a moral motive can lend value in God's eyes to an otherwise moral action; or that a rightness, which is unintentional on the part of the agent, or merely incidental to his purpose, can characterise his action objectively and make it a

righteous action, one, that is, loved and performed for the sake of that rightness.

It needs not a base motive to demoralise such an action—some animal desire, some craven abject fear, some fleshly heaven or hell; no, the highest intellectual or artistic delights, the purest passion, the noblest enthusiasm, the most ecstatic love—all these and other motives are, of themselves, morally colourless and need to be subjected to and regulated by the rule of right. To do right for the sake of these things is to put the creature before the Creator, self before God; it is to make the end subservient to the means. So far, it matters not whether it be for fear of detection and disgrace, or for the sake of an eternal intellectual ecstasy that a man refuses to lie or steal; in both cases he acts from self-love, not from the love of truth or justice; he does not subject himself absolutely to the ends of justice as to his God, but subjects justice to his own ends; he is the central sun, God but his satellite.

Yet an action may be non-moral without being immoral; or the motive may be some other rightness than its inherent rightness, as when a man who is indifferent to temperance keeps sober for his family's sake. Moreover, non-moral actions may be in the interests of morality, like those into which children are schooled in spite of themselves.

The teaching of Christ and Christianity, like every wise educative system, recognises the co-existence of all stages of moral and religious

development both inside and outside the Church, nay, within the life of the same individual. Inclusively and virtually it holds all those blameless elements by which the various religions, of which it is the synthesis, were adapted to the spiritual level of their period and locality. It is specified and individually characterised by what it is or can be at its highest; not by what it is throughout; by the level of moral development to which, on occasion, it alone can minister, not by those lower levels to which it also can minister and from which it can raise men to its own exclusive domain. Doubtless, as comprised in its synthesis, and as subjected to and shaped by its ultimate aims, the Judaic, like other elements of Christianity, are Christianised, the law is avowedly preparatory to the Gospel, discipline to spontaneity, the spirit of fear to the spirit of love. Still it is vain to imagine we can pass from one stage to the other by imperceptible gradations, or without an abrupt transition from plane to plane. No degree of legal righteousness, induced by threats or promises, can ever slide into that spontaneous righteousness that delights in "the law" as inherently lovely. Such spontaneous obedience is a generically different and higher sort of action; it is not a "development" of the lower sort any more than the law of love is a "development" of the levitical law. Yet the lower can occasion and prepare the way for the higher, can awaken a conscious need of it; what at first is done lovelessly, for reward and punishment,

comes at last to be done for love alone. When the limb is restored, the crutch, having served its purpose, is thrown away. Hence Christ's appeal to self-interest is pedagogic and protective; it is an appeal to the non-moral or feebly moral sub-Christian soul; it is a *Surge qui dormis*, a call to the dead, or fatally slumbrous, to rouse them to their danger; it is a provisional discipline or safeguard for the babes and weaklings, whose purpose it is to hasten the day in which they shall be able to dispense with it.

More than this; there are oft-recurring hours in life when the wise virgins, no less than the foolish, must slumber and sleep, hours of spiritual weariness and intermission of vigilance:
Hours:

> "When my light is low,
> When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
> And tingle: and the heart is sick,
> And all the wheels of being slow."

Hours:

> "When the sensuous frame
> Is racked with pangs that conquer trust,
> And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
> And Life, a Fury slinging flame."

Most of us are so spiritually weak as to be dominated by our higher ideals and impulses only in our best or better moments, when our head is clear and our heart untroubled and our nerves are at rest, when our attention and all our energies are at our disposal and within our full control. Whatever destroys this happy balance of condi-

tions lowers us to a sub-Christian spiritual level, on which the strictly and most purely Christian motives appeal to us very ineffectually, perhaps not at all. We may thus be lowered and degraded at times by psychic or physical derangements to depths that would induce despair were it not for the conviction that what we are at our best moments is what we most truly are in the eyes of the All-Discerning. It is only in the very strongest and greatest souls that the higher light is so intensified as never to be wholly dimmed; in those who are, so to say, Christian to some degree at every level of consciousness and self-possession, whose heart and love are awake even when they slumber and sleep; and to bring our lower and more passive states ever more under the active control of our will and under the guidance of the best light that is in us is the great task of our lives.

In those moments, then, of spiritual lassitude, when, Esau-like, we would sell our birthright and blessing, all our hopes, ideals and prospects for some mess of pottage, some transitory relief of the moment; when self is strong and alert within us and Conscience faints and falters, then it is to self that we must appeal with a *Quid prodest?* What will it profit me to gain the whole world and lose my own soul? Each of us has some Hell or Heaven of his own, far different, perhaps, from that which is prescribed by theology for all; each has some conviction of a solid lasting happiness bound up with his

loyalty to Conscience, of some state of spiritual misery and ruin and death following, like a sure-footed Nemesis, on treason against duty. Purely as self-regarding, such motives are as non-moral as the slave's terror of the lash or the mercenary's hunger for booty, yet as pressed into the service of morality they become extrinsically ethical and religious. They serve to silence our egoism by convincing it of self-contradiction; they are therefore protective of morality during its infancy and other times, when it is too weak to protect itself.

No doubt there is something quite unworthy of a spiritual and civilised religion in an appeal to merely animal and sensual selfishness, exclusive of those higher and more human forms of spiritual selfishness that can be held in check by the prospect of suffering permeating the whole man, soul and body—the body only consequently on the soul. Wild beasts are tamed by such motives; men are simply bestialised by them, and confirmed in their false view of animal pain as the extremity of evil, and of animal pleasure as the utmost good. Yet as little as we are now capable of purely spiritual thought, which is not in some degree imaginative and incorporate, so little are we now capable of conceiving any suffering or sorrow, however spiritual, in which our emotions —our heart and nerve and brain—shall not be engaged. To rob the idea of its physical element would be to cancel it altogether. Our taste may revolt from the scorching flames of Gehenna; but we know of no pain so ethereal that it does not

literally corrode and burn away the texture of our fleshly bodies; nor can we so refine our conception of the "pain of loss" that it shall not also be a "pain of sense," and embody itself in blinding tears, in gnawing desires, in lowered pulse and failing energy. All human pain is mingled of sense and spirit, higher and lower differing only according to the proportion of the ingredients. All pain, in one way or another, comes to us through our entanglement with that great ruthless mechanism of Nature, from which it is the task of the spirit to free itself, which it must fight against and subdue to its own use and service. In a thousand ways we are caught in the wheels, crushed, bruised, and tortured in spite of ourselves. And in all such sufferings we learn how blindly cruel and remorseless a power we yield ourselves to whenever we deliberately and passively commit ourselves to the current of dominant inclination and cease actively to assert our personality, our power of self-determination, against our arch-enemy. On the other hand, it is the conviction of our faith, the affirmation of our whole moral nature, that if we conquer this tyranny when we are free to do so, we shall at last be delivered from it altogether, and "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain."

It is, then, not as appealing to sense, but as appealing to self, that the doctrine of the unquenchable fire seems at first sight discordant with the prevailing note of Christian teaching.

But, like all medicinal and protective methods, this too is liable to grave abuse when its purely provisional and temporary character is disregarded. If the crutch be not discarded when needless, the limb will wither away from disuse. To make rewards and punishments and the self-regarding consequences of our actions the normal and abiding motive of our conduct is to abandon morality altogether; it is to descend from the specifically Christian plane of religion to a lower plane and to live there permanently. That plane is included in Christianity only as a stepping-stone to a higher; as an abiding place it belongs to a lower religion altogether.

For the Christian, fear is but an emergency motive; "perfect love casts out fear." But love is not always perfect, and there are, as we have said, times of spiritual, mental, and physical depression when the lower elements of our being make themselves felt almost to the extinction of the higher. How futile at such moments to appeal to sentiments wholly latent. The dread of losing God is felt only by those who feel also that they love Him; it is in vain to invoke such motives in the case of the hardened sinner, or even of him in whom physical and spiritual causes have wrought a temporary apathy. Now it is that we must rather point out the ruin of both, which will ensue from the sacrifice of the higher to the lower. It is of the body alone that we are conscious, or of the world, or of our purely selfish instincts; to these then

must we make our appeal. The fruits of sin are placed before us in glittering array, sweet and savoury to the taste; we must turn to faith to convince us that their last results are exceeding bitter.

We are frail and changeable; the sun of our spiritual firmament is often hidden by the clouds engendered by our earthly existence; we must turn in all humility to the lower means of help and strength when the higher fail us. Thus will fear become the bulwark of love, and self-interest be exploited in the interests of selflessness.

CHAPTER X

"LOVE NOT THE WORLD"

Ascetical writers tell us, very truly, that it is our inward dispositions that really signify. Were there a text-book of worldliness the same principle would certainly be inculcated. It is the soul that is to be gained and not the body, and the world distinguishes very readily a mere outward conformity from inward adhesion. We sometimes see an artificial attempt at outside worldliness of speech and conduct on the part of those who are essentially unworldly; we see pitiful and grotesque attempts at flippancy and irreverence, an endeavour to speak lightly of that which is really regarded as sacred, an effort to enjoy things which are genuinely distasteful, to assume an air of frivolity not in real harmony with the inner feelings; but the failure of such efforts is good proof of the discrimination which the world knows how to exercise. The old tales of Faustus and his kind contained a hint of this truth; the devil is ready to serve those who are inwardly subject to him, and the world is at the feet of those who think with it. Its life depends on the mental attitude of its children; it expands with

their worldliness, shrinks with their unworldliness.

The world is, in its own way, a church invisible, with a single existence and organism, made up of many component parts. Like the Church it lives for the sake of its members, but expects a return of loyalty and service, an inner fidelity to its doctrines and regulations. It has, in a subtle and undefined manner, its hierarchy and its pastors, its index, its councils, its anathemas. Its form is less definite, its existence less conscious, but it is none the less positive in its sway, absorbing in its demands. Its claims, in fact, are hardly less than those of God; it must be loved with all the heart and with all the soul, and no mere mechanical obedience will suffice. It has a very definite theory as to its own end and aims, as to the evil which it would avoid, the good which it would seek; and this theory must be shared by any who would be its members, for, indeed, its existence is collective, and is made up of those who belong to it, and who would not really so belong unless they yielded both inner and outer assent to its teaching.

It is a consequence of finite and separate conditions of being that all distinction implies a certain opposition, though not necessarily one of hostility. Every association is opposed in some sense to those outside it; and thus when we speak of "the world" as a definite society or corporation, we imply the existence of another world or other worlds; to be against "the

world" means, not only to be unworldly, but to be other-worldly. And as "the world" is even further represented as a more or less militant organisation, which indeed its action continually proves it to be, it becomes the more apparent that it has some definite enemy or enemies against whom it is in a continual state of warfare. Hence its need of hearty inward allegiance, and its continual insistence on the fact that those who are not with it are against it. It lives by the strength of its own right arm; it cannot afford to sleep or rest, for everything that it loses becomes an increase of power to the opposing side. If it cannot gain an universal victory, then it must maintain an attitude of defiance towards those elements which it has not been able to subjugate, for, in a war of principles, reconciliation means at least partial death to one side or the other. "Not peace, but the sword" must inevitably be the motto in such a combat, wherein the success of either opponent consists, not so much in weakening the force of his enemy, as in the consequent adding to his own; the victory is not measured by the number of corpses on the side of the vanquished, but by the increased number of the living on the side of the conqueror.

It is an error to regard this hostile instinct, which is to be found also in the followers of the Gospel, as a result of blindness and narrowness. To fight against the world is as essential to their calling as it is for the world to fight against the Gospel; either lives by the death of the other.

It is so obvious as to be hardly worthy of remark that we may speak of "the world" in more than one sense; but it has unfortunately happened that these senses have not always been sufficiently distinguished in what has been written and said in regard to the relations of the Christian with the world. There is a world which is not anti-moral nor anti-Christian, but simply non-moral and non-Christian; it is not a rival camp but a neutral ground between the camps, a field in which Christian principles and Christian strength can be exercised. This is the world from which Christ desired not that His disciples should be taken—in it they were to live, and work, and suffer, and learn, and grow strong. But they were to be preserved from harm, that is, from the poison of that spiritual "world," of that rival Church invisible, which uses the other neutral world and works in it, even as Christianity does. The "world," then, as the enemy of Christ, as a collection of men and women hostile to His teaching, has a creed of its own, principles of its own, and that creed and those principles are directly opposed to the Gospel. What the world would bring about, in itself and in those who belong to it, is a free and entire submission to the natural self-regarding tendency implanted by God in every creature, not that it may have full play, but that, controlled by higher laws, it may serve to the universal well-being and right order of the universe.

"Ye shall be as gods;" this is the whisper of the tempter when he would draw us, not to heaven,

as the words would imply, but to earth; to be as gods upon the earth. This is the whisper which we all hear in certain moments of darkness and turmoil; moments in which we realise passionately our own weakness and limitations, and in which the whirlpool of self-love and boundless ambition lies open at our feet, luring us to the plunge, and ready to suck us downwards into its black and restless abysses. These are times in which all the disordered self-love, that pervades in a general way the rest of our life, becomes focussed and concentrated, revealing its nature and strength in its effort to overmaster every other impulse. And it is to this instinct in every one of us that the world makes its appeal. We *would* be as gods, and it offers us a society in which we *may* be as gods, provided only we respect the same claim in others; we would be adored, and here are many ready to worship us, if we will offer incense in our turn. No more finitude for us nor for our associates, but unlimited rights and boundless deference. It is not a question of certain external conditions of wealth or education; any kind of society will suffice for the satisfaction of our claims to divinity. The "world" is essentially an association of false gods, and their thrones can be set up in any kind of external surroundings.

We can see, then, most plainly that this world's antagonism to the next is no mere pugnacious instinct, but an essential element of its very being. It recognises nothing outside itself, be-

cause it claims to find all within itself; to be not a part but the whole, and to teach every one of its members to put forth the same claim in his own behalf. Every living thing tends of itself to unlimited expansion, and in so far as the world feels that it has not the key to the whole it rejects and anathematises that whole. It will absorb all it can, and fight till death for the destruction of that which it cannot absorb. The other world, of the invisible and future, is hateful because it diverts strength from itself. All things work together for the service of God—matter and spirit, body and soul, time and eternity—but only a part can be utilised in the service of the "world"; the rest, then, must be regarded as simply superfluous and obnoxious.

Undue self-contempt is not the cure for worldliness, but rather to oppose a true estimate of self to a false one. The world is limited and exclusive; Christianity is comprehensive and has an use for all. The soul of man is more deeply and essentially an instrument of God's will than of self-advancement, though the latter instinct is more vivid and sensible, because it is nearer the surface and more immediately and frequently called into requisition. Its deepest impulse, albeit the last to be developed into clear consciousness, is towards a divine and universal good, whereof its particular good is but a single note in the harmony, essential indeed, but wholly subordinate to that final result, in whose realisation alone it can find rest and happiness. Our true task of

self-development and self-preservation lies in developing this implanted seed of self-forgetful love, and making it paramount over the self-seeking propensity. This latter lays hold of us, while we must lay hold of the first; the devil and the world clamour for possession, because it is a part they desire; God stands back and waits, because He lays claim to the whole. It is for the free, intelligent creature to understand this purpose of God and co-operate with it; to control and direct its self-seeking instincts in the interests of God's Kingdom. In yielding itself passively to their sway, in being mastered by self instead of mastering self, the soul not only rebels against the sovereignty of God, but likewise renounces its own place in the universe. We must correct our natural selfishness, not by asking little, but by asking the right thing; by that due sense of proportion through which we shall recognise, not only that God and man are necessary to us, but that we also are necessary to them.

"*Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando*"; fierce and heart-rending is the battle in which the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world strive for the mastery; Christ with His gospel of self-denial and charity—the world with its doctrine of self-centred love; Christ bidding men to get only that they may give—the world bidding them give only that they may get. The same weapon may, by its different use, be made to serve either cause, and the same earth may become the vestibule of Heaven or Hell.

But the true Saviour is he to whom "all the world is as one man and one man as all the world," who loves the whole and who loves each member of that whole, who cherishes neither the body without the soul nor the soul without the body, but has made "two in one," saving the flesh along with the spirit and the individual along with the universe. Christ is the love of God Incarnate, bringing to us, in word and in deed, the twofold commandment of the love of God and the love of man, each comprehending and supposing the true love of self.

CHAPTER XI

"CHRIST CRUCIFIED"

"We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." The cross or crucifix is the symbol of Christianity; "Christ crucified" is the object of Christian worship. In Him we worship God revealed, not simply as the sovereign creative power that shapes and governs the physical world, not simply as the sovereign intelligence and source of all speculative wisdom and understanding, but as the sovereign goodness and righteousness which is inclusively and identically Wisdom and Power, and apart from which they were but objects, the one of spiritual, the other of materialistic, idolatry and superstition. In Him that Divinity, which we know inwardly as Conscience, takes flesh and lives out its own law, its ideal of human perfection, before our eyes: *Verbum caro factum est.*

First it is in the irresistible and seemingly arbitrary powers of physical nature, especially in terrifying violations of uniformity, in the storm,

the earthquake, the thunderbolt, that the child-man sees evidence of a divinity to be worshipped with awe and reverence. Later, as he grows in wisdom and understanding, and learns that skill and knowledge are ultimately stronger than brute force in the struggle for life, he bows down before the intelligence that is revealed in the order, design and uniformity of Nature, as well as in the minds of sages and prophets and poets. Last of all, he learns that nothing can command his unqualified worship, devotion, and sacrifice but Right and Right alone; that conscientiousness is the only thing that matters infinitely, absolutely, eternally; that as power divorced from wisdom is blind and brutal, so wisdom divorced from goodness is "earthly, sensual, devilish." Hence it is vain to seek for this God in the commonest and lowest categories of being, in the mechanical aspects of Nature, as the First Cause of matter and motion; or again in the traces of design and intelligence as the supreme contriver and artist. Rather He is to be sought in the fullest and richest developments of being and actuality, in that form of life in which the processes of nature seem to culminate and converge, which is the end whereunto all His labour conspires—in the soul of the just man, in the soul of Christ, in that which he worships as Conscience. To say that the voice of Conscience is the voice of God means that Conscience is identically that sovereign wisdom and power which are revealed to us in Nature, but which

could not lawfully command our unqualified worship till their identity with, and their subordination to, Conscience and to Righteousness had been established by faith.

> "Lost in the star-dust sown
> Through space, each grain a sun, this atom-globe
> What holds it most of worth? an Emperor's robe?
> No, Right, and Right alone."

Those myriad stars, in their changeless courses, have never failed to speak to the heart of man, to overwhelm and humble him with the sense of an immensity and eternity before which he is annihilated in his own imagination, until something within himself suddenly inverts the relation, something greater, grander, more ancient, more immense, more immutable: "Thou, O Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they shall all wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail." "*Fiat justitia, ruat cælum*" —"Let Conscience prevail, though the stars should fall."

It is this absolute supremacy of the moral order over the physical and intellectual, of right over might, that finds expression in sacred poetry or prophecy when it calls on heaven and earth, land and sea, and all the creatures therein to praise and serve and yield place to that One from

Whom they all flow, and back to Whom they must all lead; that One Who must be conceived as in some sort their author, their governor, their end—how, we know not.

It is moreover in Conscience that faith, with her dimmed vision of eternal realities looming through the mists of time, finds her principal object — one which the understanding cannot formulate except in conceptions which, if pressed as adequate, would contradict the more precise and adequate formulations of our narrower outward experience. Conscience shows us the unseen or half-seen God whom faith makes practically evident, with whom it brings us face to face; it shows us that distant hoped-for Goodness which faith transmutes from dream-stuff into substance, and puts within our present grasp. At first her conflict with the understanding is sharp and sore. The restless mind is troubled by the limits of the range of clear vision, and would see things, infinitely far, defined as sharply as those close at hand, and would press towards an horizon that ever retreats and baulks its ambition. But, quelled at last by victorious faith, it no longer "asks to see the distant scene," but is content to be guided blindfold, step by step, by the firm hand of Conscience; is content to *believe* that there is no other way by which men can come to the Father, to a knowledge of eternal truth, to a fruition of eternal life. It cares less and less to formulate and define and understand that which it loves and worships and

obeys; or to seek after signs and wonders and special interferences with established uniformities. It no longer strives vainly to understand the mystery of evil; or to see how suffering is useful; or how truth must prevail; or how goodness must be rewarded by happiness either here or hereafter; or must, contrary to all known experience, essentially further and not hinder the interests of truth and morality. These are the thoughts of its childhood, that mature faith puts away and transcends by its realisation of the sovereign, eternal, unconditioned (and yet altogether mysterious and unprovable) value of Right, of the Divine Will, of the law of Conscience. "Though He should slay me, yet will I hope in Him." Results—good or evil, to myself or to others—are irrelevant when Conscience clearly forbids or commands: "What is that to thee? Do thou follow me."

Again, it is under the aspect of Conscience that God is the source of our hope and fortitude, of our confidence and resignation, of our all but stoic indifference to the chances and changes of fortune. It is equivalently of a good Conscience that the Spirit says: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee; and what is there on earth that I desire in comparison with thee?" "Set me beside thee, and let whosoever will fight against me;" "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me;" "I spake of Thy testimonies in the face of princes, and was not ashamed."

Is not this the secret of the fiery courage of prophets and martyrs? and also of their peaceful resignation? "I will lay me down in peace and take my rest;" "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit;" "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me." All this but gives expression, in the received terms of religion, to that same spirit of fearless independence and courage which animates the martyrs of Conscience; the implicit saints of every age and class, who, consciously or unconsciously, have been disciples of Christ crucified and sharers in His grace, who have seized the precious gold of religion, albeit formless, shapeless, and in the rough ore.

Once more, conscientiousness is the kernel, the essential element of the love of God, which is the eternal life of the soul. Alone, and unclothed with emotion and affection, it seems a cold, spiritual, bloodless quality, little akin to the ardent personal love of God and man which marks the saints and prophets. Nor is such warmth possible till Conscience has taken a personal form for us, as in the conception of the heavenly Father, or as in that of the Incarnate Son. Yet the absolutely disinterested love of right for its own sake, and as worthy of unlimited self-sacrifice and worship, is a higher principle of action even than the emotion that makes it easy and almost necessary for us to suffer and die for those we love; it is a principle to which that emotion must look for its sanction and rule and measure.

When we say that we "ought" to love God, we implicitly confess that duty is something higher and more imperative than Divine love; that God *as Conscience* has prior and more absolute claims over us than God *as Person;* that Conscientiousness is more indispensable than the personal sentiment by which it is transformed into Charity.

Moreover, it is characteristic of the martyrs of Conscience, of men governed by the "moral passion," by a disinterested enthusiasm for Right, to feel strong kinship and brotherhood with those who are equally sincere and conscientious, however divergent and even contrary may be their creed, their ethical, political, or other convictions and aims; to feel that these divergencies are, not indeed absolutely, but comparatively indifferent where there is unity as to the "one thing needful"—fidelity to God in Conscience. Not "absolutely indifferent," for those who love righteousness most purely and intensely are they who will strive most diligently to know and to make known what is right, and to bring men into ever increasing agreement. But their dominant wish and aim in reference to all men, and especially to those in whom they are otherwise interested, is to see them before all things conscientious; to care less for any other ill that might befall them than for their moral deterioration and ruin; to devote themselves strenuously to the service of what in religious language is called "the kingdom of God upon earth," that

is, to the establishing of the dominion of Conscience in the souls of men and in the life of societies and states. Now this moral aim is not the whole of the love of one's neighbour, which also includes a strong philanthropic affection for the entire man, body and soul; but it is the central and most essential element, without which such love were, at best, a sort of animal good-nature and unselfishness: "Man shall not live by bread alone," not by the meat that perisheth, but by the "meat that endureth to everlasting life."

It is then because Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of Conscience, because it tends to bring men back to this as to the one thing needful, to subordinate all its teachings and institutions and observances to this as to their end and explanation, that it can claim to be in some sort "the absolute religion." Not but that Conscience is worshipped in all religions more or less; not but that Christianity, in virtue of its specific doctrines and rites, is *a* religion, and as such must be classed and compared with the other religions, however advantageously; but that Christianity has seized and enunciated the distinction between the end and the means, between the absolute and the relative values of its institutions; between the inward spiritual life and the vehicles and expressions of that life; because it professes to liberate souls, not to enslave them; to minister to them, not to be served by them—a profession to which it must

return again and again in virtue of its first principles. Nay more, its institutions themselves by their very nature cry out: "We are not the end of religion, do not rest in us; but, through us, pass onwards and upwards and inwards—through the letter to the spirit, through the symbol to the reality, through the external to the internal."

Now it was as being equivalently the pure worship of Conscience that the worship of Christ crucified was a stumbling-block to the Jew, a foolishness to the Greek. The one looked for a warrior-Christ who would burst through the heavens with legions of angels to scatter the enemies of Israel and take the heathen for his inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession. The other looked for an Apollo, a Light-God, who would coerce the intellect by its own laws, irrespective of moral dispositions and reasons of the heart, and would unite mankind intellectually by a revelation of the only true and final philosophy—of the secret of all existence. If Christianity appealed to the former, it was only in so far as it seemed to manifest miraculous power over Nature or other malignant spirits, and to be potentially a world-conquering force in the material order. If it appealed to the latter, it was only because it seemed to promise a philosophical unification of thought, and to admit of harmonious statement in the categories of Platonism. But in so far as it disappointed both expectations and even condemned and

resisted the spirit which dictated them, the religion of Conscience, of Christ crucified, was a scandal to the Jew and folly to the Greek—taking these as standing respectively for materialism and intellectualism in religion.[1]

"Christ crucified" is the highest revelation of eternal life, of that spiritual glory symbolised by His subsequent Resurrection and Ascension. His real moment of triumph and apotheosis was not that in which His bodily life was renewed, but that in which His soul rose to its sublimest height of Divine love and self-sacrifice, that in which He said: "It is finished," and bowed His head and gave up the ghost. It was for this that God exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name. Obedience to Conscience; obedience unto death, even to the death of the Cross—that is the ideal of life that Christianity sets before us in the crucifix and enables us to realise. Her Churches are but the temples of Conscience, worshipped on her altars, honoured in her saints and heroes, fostered in the hearts of her children.

If we find prophetic parallels between the destinies of the martyrs and saints of old and that of Christ, it is only because such sufferings are always and necessarily the lot of the Just, of the martyr of Conscience in his converse with the

[1] No doubt the "Jew" of this context is (like *e.g.* the Frenchman's "Anglais") a convenient symbol of all and of only those features of Judaism that were antagonistic to the writer's own religion.

world of wickedness, or, still worse, of mediocrity; and therefore the Most Just One, He who was Incarnate Righteousness and Conscientiousness, was bound to realise that destiny in its bitterest form. The saints were but as green wood in the fire of persecution, He was the dry wood; in Him there was nothing to damp or mitigate the consuming fury of evil, nothing to qualify the absolute, life-long purity of a heart enslaved to the worship of conscience: "*Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum.*" In Him sin met with no measured or participated holiness, but with holiness itself; it found God at last in vulnerable form, clothed in the weakness of our passible and mortal nature, and it leapt upon Him like a hungry wolf on a trembling lamb and tore Him limb from limb: "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

In the crucifix, however, we must see not merely the personal sacrifice which Christ, "according to the flesh," offered to Conscience, to the Divine will, but the symbol of that universal and perpetual sacrifice offered by the mystical corporate Christ; by the invisible Church of the saints and martyrs and confessors of Conscience, whereof He is the head and bond; of those whose daily sacrifices and sufferings for justice' sake are united with His in a pure offering, which ascends to Heaven ceaselessly, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. It is through this sacrifice, and only at this cost, that the sin of the world can be covered and taken

away, that the kingdom of God can be established over the souls of men. "Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His saints," of those who have lived and suffered and died for the salvation of the world and for the rights of Conscience. "Precious," because their desire, their prayer, their labour, however seemingly futile, is the imperishable force by which these ends, sooner or later, are to be furthered and realised. From the one grain of wheat that perishes in the earth comes a full ear, and from this at last a whole harvest of grain. So with the defeat and death of the saints. Their spirit, intensified and strengthened by persecution, lives to quicken multitudes, to fashion for them a mystical and glorified body, to spread the fire upon earth which they came to kindle.

The crucifix, therefore, is the Christian's answer to the problem of life's meaning and value. "This," it says, "is the best of which man is capable. He can labour and suffer and die for Conscience sake; from a disinterested love of Right, of the Divine Will. In this he lives with a superhuman life; nay, it is God who lives in him, and, through him, as through a willing and obedient instrument, works out His own Divine life and purpose." "I live," says Paul, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is not in self-limitation, in Bouddhistic contempt of life, in suffering for its own sake, in stoic callousness to pain and affliction, that Christ calls us to follow Him; but in that active, energetic devotion to

the cause of Conscience which inevitably entails suffering. It is not because we forsake all that we become His disciples; but, conversely, because we become His disciples we must forsake all, and take up our cross and follow Him.

CHAPTER XII

"THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW"

I

A GREAT preacher once attempted to rouse his hearers by a dramatic introduction to his discourse, announcing to them, as a new and hitherto unknown fact, that they were all to die. We live our short lives somewhat like insects in the blaze of a summer day, and are, for the most part of the time, oblivious of the suspended sword, which sways to and fro over our heads, nearer to us with each oscillation. And yet, in our more intense moments, especially those of joy, the shadow grows blacker and more distinct, and the sense of impending doom lends an added, though a sadder, sweetness to the happiness that cannot last.

But the Valley of the Shadow of Death gets its name not only from this, its last and only exit, that dark forest whose shade lies heavy on all the roads that lead to it, but also from the many preceding deaths which must take place before this final one. We live in a continual process of dissolution, issuing in a new and transformed life; and the death of the body is, in its

terrors, its struggles, its final issue, the last, but not always the most momentous, of those changes. But, on the other hand, these previous crises can often be avoided, at least in part; we can suffer less or suffer more according as we choose to go "round about," or "right through, though the path may be never so strait." We can guard our mind from the storm of doubt, from the weariness of questioning and investigation, by keeping it safely immersed within the walls of use and custom. We can shelter our heart from the careless shaft of the passer-by, from the deeper aimed stroke of the friend, by keeping it wrapped in the bandages of self-love. We can make ourselves proof against slights by coldness and insensibility, against humiliations by pride and indifference. We can reach the end of life with little hard-earned experience and self-knowledge, with the face of the soul unlined and unwrinkled, but we are brought to bay when flesh and spirit have to face the crisis together, and when the soul can no longer escape its share of their common anguish. Even then, however, a certain evasion is possible, and such as have been the previous crises may be the present one. We may still have power to choose between two alternatives, and either to stand boldly face to face with the destiny which is about to overwhelm us, to make it our own, and thus, in a sense, to conquer it, or to slink along, with eyes shut, and wait until we be finally overcome. Better, though harder, the former choice:

"I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!

I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold."

R. Browning, *Prospice.*

Could those who have actually passed the bourne return to describe their experiences, they might have to say, as St. Paul of his heavenly visions, that they lay beyond the power of human utterance. It may all be comprehensible on the other side, but it is not on this, and, therefore, even so much as they could put into language, would possess a comparatively slight value for us. And yet would not the little they told us bear some resemblance to those other crises which occur in the course of our mortal life?—crises which are like to death, not only in their terror and their darkness, but also in the fact that they are more or less indescribable; that, however graphic the pen or the tongue, only he who has felt can know, though even he cannot fully understand. Those who have really lived and who have, consequently, really suffered, may find, when they come to die, that the sensation is not so entirely novel as might be supposed; that it is not now for the first time that "death and life are meeting in fearful strife"; that even though this

final crisis has a peculiar character of its own, it is not in all ways more terrible than those that have preceded. They too came to us under the cloak of death and extinction, and our struggle was a struggle for life. The *Selva Oscura* lay before us, with a gaping entrance and no visible outlet, and we knew that we could not enter that forest and come out unchanged at the other end. Hence the fierce, instinctive conflict with something stronger than self; hence that supreme effort by which, in acute mental suffering, as probably in death, the powers seem to gather themselves into one to resist the force that would separate or dissolve them. Such may be the reason for the experience of those who, having been in close contact with death, tell us that the whole life seemed to be concentrated in a lightning vision, a summing up of past and present into one unbroken continuity; an assertion of personal oneness against the inroad of dissolving forces.

We dread, and justly dread, the loneliness of death, and yet, paradoxical as it may sound, one of its terrors is that we are not alone, but are wrestling with forces which press upon us without coming clearly within our ken; they over-master our consciousness, and yet remain dark and indescribable. Death seems to be like the Boyg in "Peer Gynt," a thing that "strikes not," "that conquers but does not fight," "that will not use force," but "conquers in all things without it," so that

at last the sufferer, laying down his arms, cries out—

> "Too dear the purchase one pays for life
> In such a heart-wasting hour of strife."

Of this supreme struggle many have had an actual forecast; all have had at least some hint in previous crises of acute suffering. But the great question to be asked, in regard to the agony of suffering as in regard to the agony of death, is whether it be, in both cases, a struggle with life or a struggle with death. Are we fighting for re-birth in a new environment? or are we simply resisting those forces which would break up and dissolve our personality, just as the complex unity of the body is loosened by the hand of death? If our answer be given in the Christian sense, then the very agony of the soul is the pledge of her immortality, of the power of fresh assimilation, and her pain is the pain of transition from the known to the unknown, from a lesser to a fuller actuality and experience.

To prepare for death is, then, to prepare for every crisis over which the same shadow is cast, and according to our fundamental beliefs we have to make ready for our final and inevitable dissolution, or to prepare our soul for that struggle, those struggles, which precede the entrance of a stronger and fuller life. And perhaps one of the most reassuring pledges of our survival of that last crisis will be found just in our having personally surmounted the previous ones—we have

already known what it is to absorb new life instead of being swallowed up in it, and we get an added trust that death too will end in victory. Our self has lived on through doubt issuing in fuller knowledge, through bitterness issuing in greater love; it has already transcended its own experiences, shall it not always do so?

II

"Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me, yet not My will but Thine be done!" In these words are summed up all the elements of that complex agony which we have attempted to describe. There is the chalice, with its unknown ingredients, whose bitterness so overmasters every other impression that analysis is almost impossible. There is the sense of another force, and here, most definitely, another will, struggling with the weak but impassioned will of the sufferer. There is, again, that sense of contact with the unmeasured, the limitless, which is the accompaniment of strong emotion and intense realisation; an experience solemn even in joy, but purifying in sorrow. A convinced materialist may, perhaps, not have to endure this last-named horror, but every wider philosophy leaves its disciples exposed to it.

Now in Christ this third element of suffering was, not less, but infinitely greater, than in us. He had a closer and more special relation to the infinite, and a consequent strain on His human powers which we can never know. And as His

relation to the infinite was more direct and inevitable than that of other men, so too was His connection with all humanity immeasurably nearer and more personal. He was weighted with the office of mediator between God and man, and His sufferings responded to this twofold destiny. If then we can none of us fathom our own sorrows, nor describe them to another, still less could He do so, not by reason of a lesser understanding, but by reason of a more fathomless object. His soul "is sorrowful unto death," and this is all that He can tell us. He asks for sympathy, and yet He goes "yonder to pray"; for the victory must be gained in solitary conflict, however welcome the love of another may be. He must make Himself "alone with His Father who is in heaven," that nothing may interfere with the battle, that tender hands may not intervene to snatch Him from the conflict, that He may meet His destiny face to face, feel the presence of an Infinite will on His own, and conquer, not man, but God.

> "Thou wilt feel all, that Thou mayst pity all;
> And rather wouldst Thou wrestle with strong pain
> Than overcloud Thy soul,
> So clear in agony."
>
> —KEBLE, *Christian Year.*

"Not My will but Thine," and yet that will He seeks is not for death but for life! His passage is to a fuller, a more divine stage of His

destiny, but the poor mortal will must suffer in the transit.

There are powers in Nature that are intended, not to exercise supreme action, but to be guided by other forces, in combination with which they secure the desired end. The same force which, left free, would carry the ship out of her course, is that which, under direction and control, is designed to carry her forward in it. The created will is a force which, if left free, tends to assert itself indefinitely, to push aside all that stands in its path, to make self the centre to which all lines must converge. There is within itself, taken thus in the abstract, apart from its subjection to the Divine will, the sun round which its rectilinear force is bent and curved, no principle limiting this self-preserving, self-regarding tendency.

And yet, though our will thus tends to unlimited self-assertion, it is not designed or made for isolation and total independence, but is fashioned for subordination to the superior force of the Divine will, which directs its use and destiny in relation to the whole. And this pressure of the finite against the infinite is necessarily attended with pain, a pain proportioned to the energy of the two forces in conflict, for it is the curbing of a conscious tendency, a self-repression and a partial death. If we shrink from this agony; if self refuse to bear the yoke of charity, of the love of God in man, of man in God; if we would subject all to self rather than self to all, our life and love and joy will dwindle

away, like that of a branch severed from the parent vine, so that, seeking to save our life we shall lose it, and in our separate existence we shall find our separate death.

It is then, chiefly, our own terror and repugnance that we have to conquer—the chalice must be drunk, that the soul may be made free; she must enter into a larger life by resignation to the sufferings of a lower one; she must adapt herself to her new environment, in which past pain will become present delight.

"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," in Christ Himself as in His followers. One of the pangs of human suffering is just this dragging and weariness of the body, which impedes the free victory of the soul. Christ agonised, as He measured the present energies of His already toil-worn and exhausted frame with the overwhelming mental struggle that lay before Him. There is a danger with us lest the sufferings of the body should drown those of the soul, just as physical pleasure may overwhelm the capacity for spiritual enjoyment.

The soul must rise supreme in pain, as in joy; the bloody sweat of the body must express the more intense agony of the soul, and the body must live on as a mere instrument of spiritual suffering, until the soul have struggled through into that higher sphere, in which the God of death becomes the God of life. For the chalice is that which the Father has sent, and the higher will is a divine and personal one. The conscious-

ness of Christ answers more and more fully to the consciousness of God; the human will that suffers to the Divine will that inflicts. But the process that ends in light is begun in darkness; and it is through the love that trusts and bears and endures unto blood that He recognises the workings of that will which is within Him and yet against Him.

And thus Christ passes on through the twilight of suffering foreseen to the night of suffering fulfilled, and the midnight darkness of the final agony on Calvary, when He bursts asunder the last bonds that fasten Him to His earthly existence, and springs into the arms of His Father—trusting to Him alone the outcome of that life and mission of which such a different issue had been expected. In darkness He came and in darkness He goes; a darkness more deep for its very nearness to the light.

"*Judex crederis esse venturus.*" The judge is to come, but has not yet arrived. The enemies of Christ are exultant—His friends are disappointed. What of the kingdom? what of the Messiahship? "We *were* hoping" is all that some of them can now say. And Christ Himself? What did that last cry of abandonment signify? Who shall say? and who shall presume to fathom the thoughts and sorrows of the God made man? But if truly He has "borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows," if He has known the griefs of all the race, then surely that cry meant, not less, but more than we can com-

prehend—and in that supreme moment the soul of our Saviour obeyed the call of His Father, and went forth into the darkness, looking back on a mission apparently unfulfilled, but confident in the final triumph of that message which He gave as man to men, but which had been conceived in the mind of God. And thus "light was made"; light clear and unveiled in the soul of the glorified Christ—light dim and reflected, but to grow brighter age by age, in His mystical body, the Church.

CHAPTER XIII

"I HAVE RISEN"

"*Exurrexi et adhuc sum tecum*"

THE proverb "out of sight, out of mind" describes the nature of a friendship which depends wholly on local presence, on common occupations, on mutual external services. But there is another and a deeper kind of love, which is not only independent to a great extent of such external conditions, but which almost grieves at times over physical nearness, as though it interfered with true soul-intimacy. We feel the inadequacy of our words to express our feelings, and not only their inadequacy but their very deceptiveness. We know that the common actions of our every-day life are the expression, not of our deepest self, but of our passing wants and impressions. We would wish to take off our shoes before entering the sanctuary of our friendship, but we are cast together at all hours and moments, and the network of material exigencies throws a veil over our spiritual intercourse. Consciously or unconsciously we fret against the bars of that "too, too solid flesh," which separates us from the soul with which we would be united.

Even in the love which is also passion this spiritual craving may be felt, wherever the highest feelings of our nature are roused; the body seems an obstacle which must be broken down in order that two souls may flow together, in an intimacy which outward union only counterfeits.

Not that we can pretend, constituted as we are of body and soul, that our affections can be wholly independent of all local nearness, so that our souls can love on indefinitely through unbroken years of bodily absence. The danger in such a friendship would be that changes of character and disposition would take place unnoticed, and that we should find ourselves at length loving, not our friend, but his memory.

> "As ships becalmed at eve, that lay
> With canvas drooping, side by side,
> Two towers of sail at dawn of day
> Are scarce, long leagues apart, descried."
>
> A. Clough, *Qua cursum ventus.*

But that which is essential up to a certain point, as means to the end, is nevertheless totally distinct from the end, and, like other means, may sometimes prove rather a hindrance than a help. And the deeper and more spiritual the love, the more will it detach itself from such temporal conditions, depending less on local nearness, in so far as it constitutes a bond which neither life nor death can sunder.

Do we not find the highest exemplification of

this truth in that unique friendship which is described in the Gospel story, that love between Christ and His disciples, which, in the union of Christ with His Church, was to be perpetuated throughout all ages? Was not physical nearness, here too, an obstacle to perfect closeness of spirit? Still more to Christ than to His disciples was not the earthly barrier hideously apparent? Was not every word a traitor to the tongue that spoke it and to the ear that heard it? Was not every outward gesture of love at once an effort to burst through the intervening wall, and a concession to its inevitable presence?

He must needs go or the Paraclete would not come. He must needs go, not only for their sake but also for His own. He, too, was living and labouring for the accomplishment of more than could be given to any limited human mind to fathom; and if He had a food of which they knew not, so too had He a sorrow which they could not even guess—the immense, unfathomable sorrow of His unique and mysterious union with that Divine nature, whose infinite purpose His human intellect must serve and interpret, though it could not wholly comprehend.

A Mediator, with all the anguish that such a destiny entails; separated from God by His "too little," separated from man by His "too much," and yet also drawn to the One because He had pity, to the other because he had need; to Him as to us, and infinitely more than to us, was death a release from captivity and blindness, an entering into the

conscious possession of His hidden inheritance. Now could He speak to His Father, and now could He speak to His brethren; nearer to their weakness in His glory and His strength than when He was closer in His infirmities. For though *they* were still hemmed in by the wall of an earthly body, there was no corresponding barrier on *His* side, and the glorified Christ passed through the closed doors of their flesh and met their spirit face to face. The barrier was now on their side only and not on His. Yet even the glorified Christ could not make himself wholly apprehensible to mortals; their minds still lagged behind, and their tongues still failed to utter even so much as their hearts conceived; so that there was inevitably a descending scale of apprehension from that point where, in mystical experience, the soul of the disciple met the soul of the Lord to the conception and understanding, and thence to the final utterance of his experience in human language. For it is the whole of us, and not only a part, that struggles to enter into the glory of the Lord; the soul, returning from the seventh heaven, would fain impart its visions through the medium of its earthly companion, but the latter strives vainly to express what the former has seen and felt, and in the effort is life, but a life which is not complete.

In this revelation then, this shining forth to the disciples of a soul, no longer shrouded in the mortality of earth, but translucent in its body of glory—of a soul which had been their noblest

fellow-prisoner—was the true secret of the Resurrection. In what manner, in what degree, it is not given us to know, but the disciples, with a throb of astounded joy, came singly and collectively to the knowledge that He was still there, in the very midst of them all; and, oh! far more! in the very centre of each one—speaking soul to soul, heart to heart—"closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet."

And, hard on the sense of His yet living presence, came the breathless hope and apprehension of their own essential deathlessness. "Where I am there shall you be also;" this was the word that echoed in their ears and hearts. New and unfathomable experiences were striving within them, new possibilities were dimly suggesting themselves, and, in all, the figure of Christ stood out, of Christ the personal and human friend, so infinitely greater than themselves, and yet now, as before, one with them. His rights were their rights, and His glory was their glory.

The gropings of those last days, in which He walked and spoke and ate with them, are now explained by the issue to which they have been conducted. Promises and assurances are no longer needed, for His continued life and intimate presence are a sufficient pledge. What they dreaded was to be left orphans, to be abandoned in mid-career, when they had started on a journey which they would never have undertaken in their own strength. But now they know that even

death cannot remove Him from their midst, and while He remains they are safe. If they do not know everything at once, they know enough to prosecute their journey, and He will guide them step by step. To us it may seem matter of envy to have been of those "who saw and touched and handled Him" in the wanderings through Galilee; but to them Easter day was the dawn of a higher and holier union and comprehension, the past was swallowed up in a more glorious present.

As to the immediate future, they are still blind and human; the secrets of time and space are hidden from their sight. But "He has risen, and is yet with them," and into His hands they commend their spirits; He has the keys of the Kingdom, and the Kingdom is at hand.

CHAPTER XIV

"THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE"

"JESUS answered them saying: The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Amen, Amen, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24).

It is a commonplace of history that the originators of great world-transforming ideas have rarely lived to realise their hopes in any appreciable measure, that they have mostly perished in the anguish of parturition; and yet, that not only in spite of, but because of, their defeat they have lived again and been glorified. Had they not failed they had not succeeded; they had remained alone; but, because they died, their spirit, which else had quickened but one, has quickened millions. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church; the Blood of Christ was the seed of the martyrs. Because He was obedient unto death, therefore hath God exalted Him, by giving Him a name that is above every other name, in which every knee should bow. This is the inward and spiritual value, the deeper

eternal reality, whereof the resurrection, the ascension, and the pentecostal fire, considered solely as events of time and space, are but the outward manifestations and embodiments, otherwise spiritually valueless. "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." In His Church, in the mystical Christ, His Holy Spirit is, as it were, incarnate, and abides with us "all days, even to the end of the world." "Another Paraclete" He promises us, and yet the same; the same in nature and character, so as to be indistinguishable in essence from the Son, as the Son is from the Father.

Hence, it is through His Holy Spirit that Christ lives in us, and that His nature and character is reproduced in us. If the glorified body of Christ is *et res et sacramentum* in the Blessed Eucharist, His Holy Spirit is the *res sacramenti*, the inward grace, the true spiritual substance and nutriment; it is the deeper reality signified and conveyed, without which the physical contact of His sacred humanity would profit us as little as it did the faithless crowds that thronged Him on every side, when but one alone touched Him and was healed.

The triumphant glorification, exaltation, and diffusion of its quickening principle was, therefore, the substantial fruit of the death and burial of that Grain of Heavenly Wheat which else had remained in sterile solitude. "If I go not away the Paraclete will not come; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." "It is good for you that I go away."

That the Church is the creation of Christ's spirit, the Society in which it has embodied itself, the Temple it has built for itself, in no-wise forbids us to see how that Spirit has worked along the lines of Nature, and according to the laws which govern the movement of the human mind in such matters. We find at first, as in analogous cases, a number of enthusiastic disciples and personal friends of the Master, so deeply infected, possessed and carried away by His Spirit as to reproduce His life and thought and manner of speech by a certain inward necessity and inspiration, and with the least possible admixture of personal idiosyncrasy — men of whom it could be said, in no mere official and juridical sense, but in all literal similarity: "He that heareth you heareth Me"; men possessed of Christ's spiritual and pastoral power over souls— of a potent persuasiveness that could loose sinners from the Devil, and bind them to God by the spell of personal love. During that first stage, and while the initial impetus of the Spirit remained in full force, there was little or no need of an organised institution controlling the individual; each apostle and saint was a Church in himself, and was, moreover, the possible nucleus of one of those first groupings, whose eventual amalgamation was the actual and necessary termination of the process by which the Catholic Church took shape. It was only the gradual, but quite inevitable (and in many ways desirable) dying down of inspiration that allowed and

necessitated the development of that supernatural institution, which was destined to be the organ of Christ's Spirit. Conceived by the Holy Ghost, in the hitherto sterile womb of the Gentile world, the Catholic Church struggles through many an uncouth, embryonic stage, to come to birth as the mystical Christ, as the social counterpart of the individual Christ—He the ideal man, she the ideal people; as the Kingdom of God upon earth; as sanctified humanity grouped round Christ, its Centre and Head.

That, in the moral and spiritual sense of the term, is the "end," the destiny, both of Humanity and of the Church; the true Parusia, the second birth and advent of the Son of Man, in which the kingdoms of this world are to be made the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. It is, no doubt, an ideal whose present practical value is like that of a guiding star to the mariner—something to make for without hope of attaining; and yet it is an ideal that is already realised in part. In germ and potentiality the kingdom of Heaven is already in our midst. It was there as soon as that Heavenly Grain was sown, whose fruit was to increase and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it. It was there, nay, in a sense, it was already accomplished, when He bowed His head and said: *Consummatum est.* It was there in the formless, unorganised crowd of new-born enthusiasts, strong in the faith that Christ had risen indeed, that He was dwelling in them sensibly and manifestly as a spirit of wisdom and power,

that He had taken possession of their very eyes and ears and shown Himself to them in bodily form.

May we not here, perhaps, find a key to the perplexing apocalyptic utterance of our Saviour (Matt. xxiv.) when we remember that the task of His life was, without scandalising their sacred but ill-instructed and gross-clad spiritual convictions, to wean them gradually from all but purely spiritual values and to teach them to see reality in these alone and not in their physical embodiments? Finding their eyes fixed so obstinately on the clouds, as the quarter whence deliverance should break upon them, He could speak to them of their true deliverance only in terms of that which they expected. He had far more to say to them, but they could not bear it then; later, the Spirit of Truth would gradually lead them into all truth; what He did and what He said, they knew not then, they should know thereafter. Cataclysms in the spiritual order pass unobserved in the world of sense; in the stillness of the night a Christ is born, the foundations of a new heaven and a new earth are laid; men wake and find all as before and say: Where is the promise of His coming? Yet to the spiritually alert and vigilant there are signs that herald the death of the old order, the birth of the new—a troubling of minds and a sense of darkness; false Christs and false prophets with pretended diagnoses and remedies; obscurity in the normal sources of light; trembling of the firm bases of truth; fear and

failing of men's hearts for the things that are to come upon the earth; a dread of the unknown; an utter impossibility of forecasting the future. These surely are signs of man's extremity and God's opportunity. When these things come to pass reason despairs, but faith lifts up her head, for her redemption is nigh, even at the very doors.

Such were the signs, in the spiritual and moral firmament, of the death of an old, the dawn of a new conception of religion; of the decadence and bankruptcy of legalism and of the speedy advent of the Spirit; of a kingdom of Heaven that came in germ and substance, though not in fulness, before that generation had passed away.

How far we are from the fulness is obvious; yet the nature and truth of the Church, like that of anything that lives and grows, is to be found in her ideal and potentiality, not in her present attainment and actuality. In the ideal there is no distinction between the bounds of Catholicism and those of humanity, or between the invisible and the visible Church—that is, between Catholics in spirit (inside the pale or outside), and Catholics by profession. The actual body is but a small section of humanity, excluding multitudes who are true Christians, including multitudes who are not; for the Church is still in the womb of time and will be till "the end of the world," that is, as long as time lasts. She is the result of the multiplication and gradual cohesion into groups, and groupings of groups, and finally into

a single organism, of men filled with the spirit of Christ. As she grew in extension she developed within her formless mass that system of bones and sinews and veins and nerves, those organs of collective thought and speech and action, whereby the light and heat and energy scattered through her myriad members might be focussed and concentrated for the advantage of each and all, and whereby the gathered experience of many nations and many centuries might be kept and pondered in one vast heart. It is through her collective spiritual labour that the hidden and inexhaustible potentiality of that buried Grain of Wheat is slowly revealed and brought to human consciousness, that Christ comes to be understood and interpreted, and is enabled to say to us those many things which the past could not bear; to purify our religious conceptions more and more from their childishness and to lead us into all truth. United with her we enter into a universal life, a universal interest; I live, yet not I, not the separate self, but Christ lives in me, the mystical Christ, the millions of redeemed humanity, past, present, and to come, the kingdom of God on earth. Through her I am strengthened by the convictions, kindled with the enthusiasms, supported by the sympathies of all the servants and martyrs of conscience, gathered round the Cross of Christ from every age and nation. In her voice I hear the voice of God, that is, of the collective God-inspired conscience of the elect of humanity, by which my own conscience is stimu-

lated and developed to a healthy independence and freed from the limitations and narrownesses of the merely individual standpoint. If she has authority over my beliefs, it is not that of a historian or scientist or philosopher, still less that of a diviner or clairvoyant or pagan oracle; it is just that of conscience, of a more enlightened and experienced conscience than my own. Right and Wrong is the criterion she applies to beliefs, in her firm faith that what is evidently true must be also right and spiritually profitable, that what is evidently wrong and hurtful must also be intellectually false. She judges all truth by its harmony with the spirit of Christ, confident that, eventually, its guidance will be intellectually justified.

Again, if she has authority over my actions, it is not coercive, like that of secular rulers and magistrates, but suasive and spiritual; it is that of the shepherd who goes before his sheep and draws them after him, not that of the drover who beats them on before him and worries them with dogs. Her commands come to me with all the authority of the experience of the saints; I obey, in the last resort, because I wish to be with Christ and His servants; because I love, not because I fear; because I am a friend and not a servant; I obey "as to Christ"; as to Him who, though He was Lord and Master, laid aside His majesty, and was in our midst as one who serves; who forbade His apostles to be as secular rulers, or to lord it over their flocks, instead of leading them by

example; who bade the greatest of them to be as the least, and to seek the only true spiritual dignity—that of ministry and pre-eminent serviceableness.

As purely spiritual, the authority of the Church, like that of my conscience, can in no way oppress or do violence to that in me to which it appeals —to my intelligence and my moral sense; it cannot cut away its own supports by any command that would shake the very grounds of my obedience; it therefore not only consists with, but fosters the most perfect liberty and autonomy.

Such, at least in ideal and hidden potentiality, is the Catholic Church, the Mystical Christ struggling slowly and painfully to a fuller and more adequate self-consciousness, to a more perfect development of that organism which the indwelling Spirit of Christ is shaping for itself (through many strange rudimentary phases) "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

PART III

THE RETURN

CHAPTER XV

"IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE"

"*Beatrice in suso ed io in lei guardava*"

BEATRICE gazed on the face of God, and Dante gazed on the face of Beatrice, on that face which reflected the Divine glory, not passively, as a mirror gives back the face that looks into it, a mere mechanical replica, but actively and lovingly, as love reproduces its object, by the strength of its own apprehension. In the perception of Beatrice Dante beheld that which, of himself, he could not have perceived.

With feeble, faltering steps we have followed Christ in His passage from Heaven to earth and from earth back again to Heaven, and now we stand upon the threshold, in front of the door through which He has passed, and we ask ourselves, will it open to us likewise, not only in the dark future beyond the grave, but *here* and *now?* Is our redemption yet to come, or is it already at hand?

For, if our spiritual pilgrimage has taught us anything, it has taught us this—that we cannot *wait* for God; if He is not in some sense already

here, He never will be—our goal must be at each stage of the road and not only at the end of it.

True, indeed, we must wait for perfect vision until we be perfectly awake, nor can our sight ever take in all aspects of what is infinitely beyond us; as yet we possess but a part of ourselves, and therefore surely cannot possess the whole of God. But this is not what we ask. Our fully unfolded life may differ from our present slumberous one almost as our waking thoughts differ from our dreaming ones; but the revelation to come must be a fulfilment, and not an exchange, however much for the better. Such as we are, such, in some sense, must we always be; and it were useless in any existence, whether present or future, to load us with treasures for which our nature had no capacity. Therefore, *hic et nunc*, God we need, God we ask for, and God we must have. Eternity has no beginning, any more than it has an end; it cannot enter into us at a given moment; we are born eternal, and the timeless is our portion from the outset. And we are likewise born with an aptitude or receptivity for all to which we can ultimately attain. As education and gentle birth make a man the social equal of all or any, however far removed in wealth and position, so a spirit is the equal of a spirit, and man, in some sense, of God—which is to say, that God is his birthright.

"Allons to that which is endless as it was beginningless.

. . . . . .

To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it,
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may reach it and pass it,
To look up or down no road but what it stretches and waits for you, however long but it stretches and waits for you.
To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,
To see no possession but you may possess it."

—Walt. Whitman, *The Open Road.*

It was the knowledge, the realisation of this our inheritance that Christ brought us, in saving men from the darkness of their previous condition. For the body weighed down the soul, and the world reflected the glory of its Maker, not as Beatrice did, by her apprehension and love, but in its dull, inanimate way, absorbing the light which it could not cast back. But in the life and thoughts and words of Christ was opened forth a fuller revelation, and He taught men, not only what they might be but what they already were. Like another and a greater Virgil He takes the soul of humanity, and the soul of each man, and leads it, with His own human hand, through the darkness of temptation and sin to the mingled lights and shadows of His mortal life, and thus to the glad daylight of the Resurrection, with its message of immortality and hope; and finally He leads it to the throne of God Himself, that throne which is, all the while, in

the very heart of man, and, having drawn from it one act of love, leaves it prostrate at its Maker's feet.

> "For now the Love that spins the sun and stars,
> Span round and round my whole desire and will,
> As on its pivot smoothly spins a wheel."

We said *one* act, and we are wont to look for many acts; but one act is enough if the act be eternal. And when we consider that our love of God is at the same time His love of us, that it is truly an eternal relation we are putting on, the question arises, can we once love "with *all* our heart, with *all* our soul, with *all* our mind," and ever altogether cease to love? It is a question which none of us may presume to answer. The Church herself leads us to the threshold of eternity, but has little to say on the fate of the individual soul hereafter. We know that the good can become bad, the pure, vicious, but we do not know whether a certain quality of love ever entirely perishes or can perish, and it is hard to believe that the spirit can ever go the way of the flesh, or an act that is an act of the whole soul be for ever effaced. For such actions of the spirit are not outside the spirit, but of its very substance; and spiritual love is inseparable from spiritual life. And hence it is difficult to think that the soul, which has once been thus clasped in the arms of God, consciously loving and consciously loved, can ever again be loosed

and abandoned, for its love is its life, and its nature is such that it cannot die. It has entered into a personal relation with the Infinite, a relation which is immortal as the soul itself.

> "There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
> The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
> What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more,
> On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round."
>
> —R. Browning, *Abt Vogler*.

In this way our first *true* act of love would be, in a sense, our last, because it is eternal, because the whole being of the soul is summed up in this, its proper and essential life.

It is as thus understood that the love of God may be said to be natural, and that we can get over the difficulty of those who are puzzled and angry at being told to love God, as though it depended on them to do so. It is only as taken in its full force, in what some might call its extreme and exaggerated meaning, that this command can be understood and justified. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;" it is as thus calling forth the whole energy of our whole being that the love of God may be said to be natural, and that we may be rightly called upon to seek and even to find it. If by "natural" we mean that

which comes about without any thought or free effort on our part, or such states of thought and feeling as are the result of inactivity and lethargic indifference, then, indeed, the love of God cannot be said to be "natural," any more than other dispositions which demand care and exertion; in this sense we are "naturally" animal and selfish and sensual, and every kind of higher development is unnatural. But if that is more truly said to be natural which blends into one harmonious whole the lower together with the higher parts of our being, which neither makes spirit the slave of sense, nor wholly extinguishes sense in the mistaken interests of spirit, if effort and striving and strenuous combat be natural, as they most certainly are, when we consider man in his completeness, then it is natural, even here below, for man to love God.

At first, indeed, the spiritual instincts are weak and rudimentary, while the animal impulses are strong and fully developed. For the growth of these latter is deterministic, dependent greatly on the universal forces of nature, not on the free and consequently omissible action of the human person. In so far, then, as this nobler self is not made paramount, even though it be not wholly neglected, our ideal of full attainment, in love as in everything else, will bear the stamp of our lower nature, and will be proportionately selfish, material, uncertain, inconstant. But in so far as, on the contrary, we recognise within us the existence of a more spiritual instinct, and of a

power to work out our own inner destiny as free, self-forming beings, so far do we see that mind and heart and will must all be exercised in the highest manner of which they are capable, and that, as there is an ideal of knowing and doing, so too there is an ideal of loving, since love is one of the chief acts of the soul. And thus as the only answer we can give to those who question the very fact of God's existence is that they must continually recognise the highest and best in themselves and all things, and thus they will be led on to recognise God as the One on whom all that highest and best depends, so too we may say that, in loving the highest and best, and in loving to the utmost, they will come at last to love God.

We all know that the body needs training and exercise to reach its full strength and perfection, that a child deprived of physical activity will never become a powerful man. In like manner we recognise that the mind cannot develop entirely of itself—mere instinctive and unavoidable exercise is not enough—it must be urged and exerted. So, too, in the matter of love, we cannot abandon our affections to mere casual and deterministic influences; here too we need self-exertion, self-direction, if we are to love in the highest sense, to love as men, not as children or animals.

Nor must we think that thus to put forth, in loving, the highest power of which we are capable means that we are wholly to restrain and crush

those emotions and feelings which depend on body as well as soul. Human love, in its noblest sense, is spiritual love, but it is not merely the love of a spirit. Passion, indeed, may exist almost, though not entirely, devoid of any spiritual element, but man cannot love like an angel without any corresponding emotion whatever. The truest and best human love consists in a due proportion of both elements. To love purely with the will is to love, not as a man but as a ghost; just as the love of mere passion is, in a man, the love not simply of an animal, but of a monster. In a word, neither is natural, both are defective, and what is natural is the union of the two. The work which God has put upon us is to till the earth and subdue it; like the uncreated Spirit, which brooded over the formless deep of the primitive chaos, the spirit of man is to brood over his own formless chaos till the whole be shaped and quickened and glorified. This is the raw material, from which is to emerge his own highest self, the image and likeness of God. The love which comes of itself, and is left to the play of merely external influences, may not be all sensual, but it is formless and uncertain. So long as it is not directed upwards it may easily creep downwards; its increase and decrease are casual and unaccountable; it may fall into spiritual inanition or physical excess. Such love is as the song of a bird contrasted with the singing of a man; it bursts from the throat joyous, but inarticulate; it is rather the voice of universal nature than of the

individual creature. But that love which acts and governs "*secondo il consiglio della ragione*,"[1] which grows ever upward from sense to spirit, comprising the lower in the higher, not leaving it behind, is human love in its highest conception. We cannot, indeed, love by our own separate power any more than we can live or think by our own separate power; but our personality is formed by the controlling, the directing, the exciting, the appropriating of those forces, without which we were nought.

"What manner of man is this, that the winds and seas obey Him?" Our senses and passions are the winds and seas, the body waiting for the soul. Well, indeed, their instinct tells them that they cannot be enlisted in this higher service without much pain and tribulation. As the natural spirit complained to Dante, "*Heu mihi! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps*,"[2] so they tremble and rebel at the work which the soul demands of them. But the die is cast, and they must go forward or the soul must go back—spirit and flesh cannot be sundered, the body must be raised heavenwards or the spirit dragged down into the mire.

"Should it appear then," says Plato, "that the better part of their nature has succeeded in bringing both the lover and the loved into a life of order and philosophy, and established its own ascendency in bliss and harmony, they live out

[1] "Vita Nuova."
[2] *Ibid.*

their own existence here, being masters of themselves and decorous before the world, having enslaved that portion of the soul wherein vice is contained, and liberated that where virtue dwells; and at last, when they come to die, being winged and lightened, they have, in one of their truly Olympic combats, achieved the prize, than which no greater can either human prudence or godly madness bestow on men" ("Phaedrus").

Here is described that chastening and elevating process whereby the heart, like the intellect, rising to ever new heights, comes to find, not only in the object of its love, but likewise in its very power of loving, something greater than itself. For every faculty, exerted to the utmost, reveals a certain infinite potentiality, and thus, by the greatness and purity of our love, we not only see God in its object, but we feel ourselves to be God-like, in virtue of that infinite force which is working through us, and over which it is given to us to dispose. "Good is the sovereignty of love, for it withdraws the mind of the lover from all base objects, but the sovereignty of love is not good, for the more faithful its disciple, the more deep and painful states must be endured."[1] In these few words the struggle, with its alternatives, is sketched out before us; love must be all or nothing. Every faculty of body and soul must minister to its human completeness, but this cannot be without much anguish on the part of those instincts and

[1] "Vita Nuova."

energies, which are to be made subsidiary, whereas they would be supreme. To force them into absolute stillness and inactivity were comparatively easy, just as it is easier to quit oneself of life than to face certain crises; but this is not what the highest love demands. True asceticism is a discipline and an effort, not a suicide or extinction, and asceticism is as inseparable from the life of love as it is from the life of faith, for the highest love, whether human or divine, is based on faith, throughout our earthly existence.

"Unless I see I will not believe;" this is the instinctive cry of our feeble, finite nature, in face of the great mysteries with which it is brought in contact. Let us worship what we can clearly and definitely conceive, let us love what we can measure and touch and enfold; this is what our intellect and heart demand when left to their own separate desires. But, like Christ to the Magdalen, so our higher aspirations of love and faith cry to these lower instincts: "*Noli me tangere* — touch me not;" drag me not down to your level, but follow on, in darkness and silence and humility, whereso-ever we shall lead.

When we were children all was plain and simple; men and women were just as we saw them and nothing more; the little Jesus in the crib, the great God in Heaven, had definite shapes and limits; we knew them and loved them as we loved our parents and friends.

But, as the realm of spirit opened out to our gaze, we came to think more humbly of our own ideas and conceptions; we saw that we but touched the garment where we thought to clasp the substance, and that even the love of our own nearest and dearest was based on an unfathomable mystery. Here then if love is not to sink it must rise, and faith must enter in as defective knowledge passes out. If our courage fail, and we shrink from the needful effort, then the love of our fellow-creatures will sink into passion or commonplace, or fade into indifference, while the love of God will be withered by scepticism or corrupted by idolatry. For idolatry is to make a god to ourselves, narrowed to our own conceptions; whereas faith is the recognition of our limits and limitations. Images are not idols when they are mere signs of something greater than themselves; but a dogma is an idol if we vainly think to comprise the infinite within its limits. Mortification of the body and the senses is sometimes more needful, sometimes less so; but this great spiritual asceticism, which is faith, becomes daily more and more necessary if we are to live to the fulness of our destiny. For at each step may recur the temptation to make *il gran rifiuto:* to shirk the primeval forest and disport ourselves in a garden of our own creation; to believe "the lie of our right hand," and swear by the idol we have made.

When this process of love once sets in, it

cannot be stayed so long as any material remains to be worked upon. In its infancy and weakness love sighs over the sacrifice of the self-regarding impulses which it is called upon to make, but, as it strengthens from day to day, these pains are less felt by comparison with the joy it finds in putting forth its power and sweeping down obstructions. Not that this sacrifice of self is to be identified with love, for it implies, indeed, an imperfection which has to be remedied, an obstacle which has to be overcome. But here and now it is the highest manifestation of love, as He taught us who had a baptism wherewith He was to be baptized, and who was strengthened until it was accomplished.

Thus it is that the love of the infinite, which is indeed our love of God and God's love of us, becomes the vitalising element of every other love. The saint and the sinner must both learn the same lesson up to a certain point; they must recognise the fugitive, limited, elusive nature of their own perceptions and apprehensions. To the sinner this world has been his god, and he has thought to find therein a limited object responding to what he deemed to be his own limited aspirations. But subject and object were both greater than he knew; the world he thought to embrace with his senses suddenly showed forth its spiritual essence, and where he had counted on grasping the finite he found himself grasped by the infinite. Happy, indeed, if the lesson be not learned too late, and if he can still find it in him

to worship where he thought to command, to believe where he thought to understand.

But the saint, too, has been, in his own way, an idolater, as he finds out at a certain point in his career; he has used the same piece of wood for a fire wherewith to warm himself, and for a statue of his God. He, too, must humble himself, must put aside his God for the true one, must lift up his heart to that which is greater than himself; he may clasp his crucifix, but he cannot clasp the living God.

Thus over us all hangs the luminous shadow of a greater universe, a pillar of light when this world grows dark, a pillar of cloud in the brightness of our created day. Under this veil of mystery and infinitude human love receives its completion and divine love begins. We are detached now, not from what is natural and human, but from what is limited and uncertain and variable and inconstant. We need not any more to turn away from the created, for the Creator is present in all, and the finite is no longer seen save by the light of the infinite. We cannot any more be satisfied with a love which is partial, intermittent, dependent on local presence or spoken words; we must now seek, even though we cannot fully attain, a love without pause, or break, or intermission, a love which is not subdued by time or space, which is not dependent on sight or knowledge, which reaches forth to a reality greater than itself. This is the treasure of divine love, through which, when

once enkindled, we love one another as well as God.

The blindness of our earth-born nature may again and again supervene, but the spirit is immortal, and can never wholly lose sight of that which it has once perceived. "For there is a law that the paths of darkness beneath the earth shall never again be trodden by those who have so much as set their foot on the heavenward road" ("Phaedrus").

. . . . . .

Here, then, we have reached the end of our pilgrimage, and the soul bows herself down before the throne of God, in whom she finds her end as she found her beginning. In the history of each one is the same oft-repeated tale, of early hope and confidence, shattered by sad experience, recovered in lowliness and faith. We began with the impress of God's face on our unspoilt nature, and we thought to fulfil our destiny in the strength of our own right arm. But we wandered from the course, blinded still more by our would-be knowledge than by our genuine ignorance, and we lost God in that very world which is so full of His presence. We were not yet equal to our infinite destiny, and we needed something more close, more human, more akin to our own selves. Then Christ met us on our way and, becoming one of us, guided us back to the lost path. He came to us as man, and we dwelt lovingly on the human incidents of His earthly life. But, as we gazed, the glory shone through Him and we saw

it was not a man, but God, on whom we were looking. His human features and actions became less in our eyes, but the infinite love and power to which they bore witness grew more, and in the Man-Christ we beheld the Man-God. As with Jesus Christ, so with all creation, the veil grew thin and transparent, the finite was merged in the infinite, until, in ourselves and in all around us, we beheld no longer mere man in his human greatness, nor the earth in its physical grandeur, but the endless and the infinite. We found God, and in Him we found ourselves, fitfully indeed, as is inevitable during our earthly life, but with the confidence that what has begun can never wholly end, but will go on, with however many interruptions, to its final completion.

"The high that proved too high, the service for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard,
Enough that *He* heard it once: *we* shall hear it by and by."

FINIS

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
Edinburgh & London

CPSIA information can be obtained
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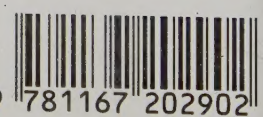
Printed in the USA
LVOW07s1300170517
534806LV00033B/1587/P



ISBN 9781167202902
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9 781167 202902

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